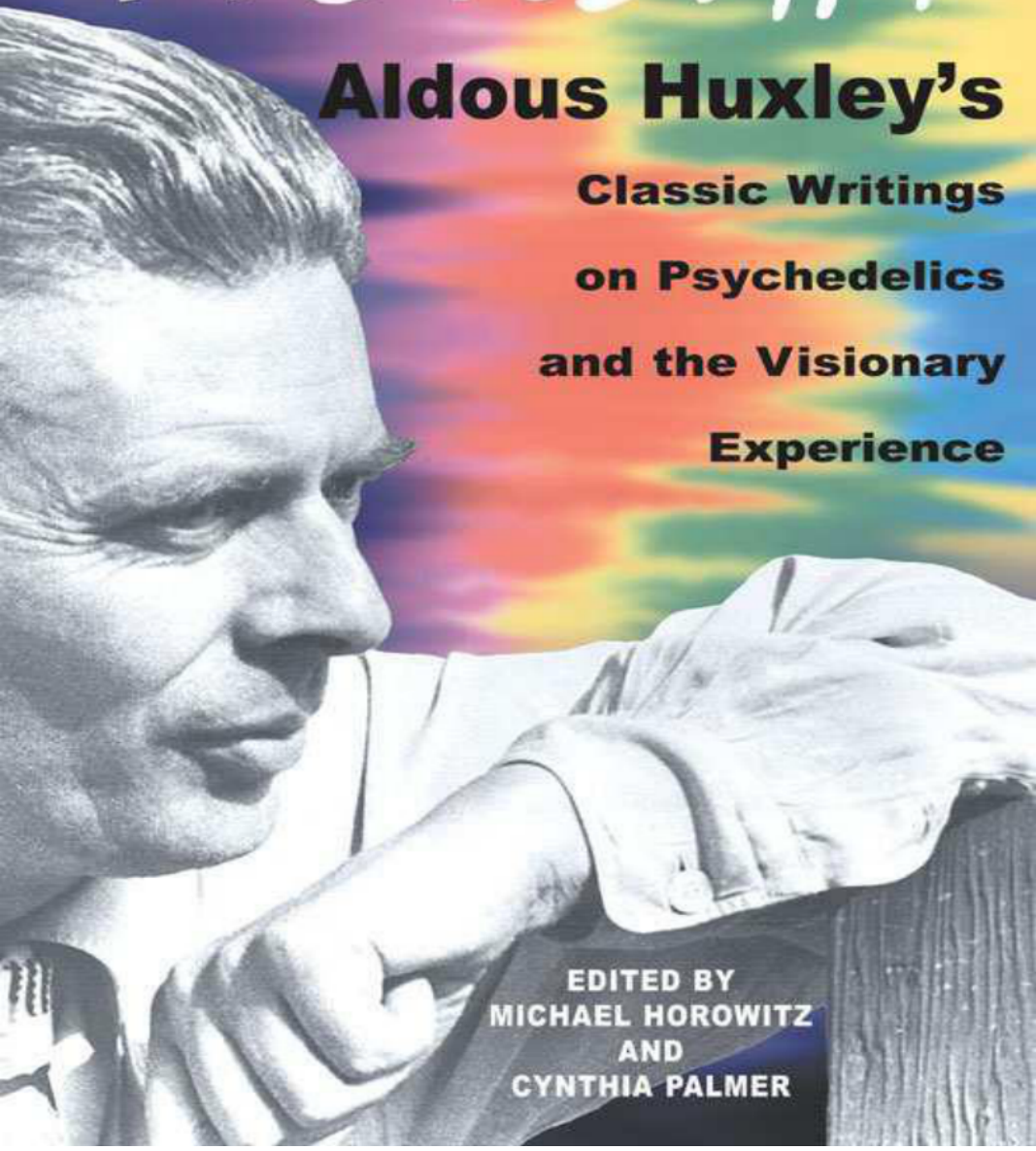
MOKSHA

Aldous Huxley's

Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience



EDITED BY
MICHAEL HOROWITZ
AND
CYNTHIA PALMER

Aldous Huxley at his home in the Hollywood Hills during his first mescaline experience, May 6, 1953. ***Photo: Humphry Osmond***

MOKSHA
Aldous Huxley's
Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience

Edited by Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer

Preface by Albert Hofmann
Foreword by Humphry Osmond
Introduction by Alexander Shulgin

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Dedicated to

Sunyata, Jubal, Winona, Uri, Joaquin

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Editors' Note

THE PRESENTATION IS chronological, except for the placement of one of the "Visionary Experience" lectures in an appendix at the end, and minor discrepancies arising from our attempt to organize each year's correspondence. Addresses are arranged according to the dates they were delivered, rather than when they were printed; essays, according to the date of their first appearance in print, rather than their publication in book form. The memoirs of Humphry Osmond and Laura Huxley are placed in the time zone in which they belong rather than their date of publication.

In the interest of reproducing the complete texts of a number of very scarce and difficult-to-obtain essays and lectures, we have risked some occasional repetition which we hope is balanced by the virtue of providing those subtle variations in the language and ideas of a master prose stylist.

The spelling of *mescalin(e)* has not been standardized, as preference is pretty well split between the popular use of the shorter form, and the more scientific use of the longer. Huxley's personal spelling of the word *psychodelic* has been retained, as this was clearly his preference.

"Bedford" refers to Sybille Bedford's superb *Aldous Huxley*: A *Biography* (New York: Knopf, Harper & Row, 1974). The "Smith" number at the head of a letter refers to Professor Grover Smith's monumental edition of *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Although references are to the first U. S. editions of Huxley's books, it should be noted that of the works reprinted in this volume all except *Time Must Hare a Stop* were first published in London by Chatto and Windus.

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We wish to acknowledge the contribution of Robert Barker, a director of The Fitz Hugh Ludlow Memorial Library, who conceived of this anthology and provided source material and research. We thank Joan Wheeler Redington for providing the transcript of the "Visionary Experience" record album, and for comparing the French and English versions of the *Planeté* and *Fate* articles. We are very grateful to Mrs. Laura Huxley for her invaluable support and assistance at every stage of our endeavors, and to Michael R. Aldrich, Executive Curator of the Ludlow Library, for editorial assistance. We also thank Humphry Osmond, Alexander T. Shulgin, Timothy Leary and Ralph Metzner for

supplying materials from their archives.

We welcome communication from Aldous Huxley readers who may have or know of any additional material for MOKSHA.

Michael Horowitz
Cynthia Palmer

Foreword

AS AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER, I was flattered that Michael Horowitz and Cynthia Palmer wanted to use my picture of Aldous Huxley surveying Los Angeles from the Hollywood Hills on May 6, 1953. I had provided the mescaline and had been with him and his wife Maria when the doors of perception were cleansed. However, when it was suggested that I write a foreword to this new edition, I became uneasy. This book is an admirable selection of Aldous's writings on a subject he had studied for many years and whose great importance he understood very well. *Moksha* is readable, enjoyable, and, best of all, browsable. One can nibble on its psychedelic pages, but what could I possibly add to what Aldous himself has written?

After some reflection, I realized that the frontispiece of this new edition gives me an opportunity to correct a curious error in Sybil Bedford's splendid biography of Aldous. Readers of *The Doors of Perception* may recall a passage about the aesthetic and mystical experience the author has gazing at the fabric and folds of his gray flannel trousers while he is under the effects of the mescaline. Miss Bedford, on the testimony of a friend of the Huxleys, disputes the "gray flannel trousers" and replaces them with blue jeans. But, in fact, the original draft of *Doors* was a report to me, which included a description of the gray bags (pants), which were the informal dress of Englishmen of Aldous's vintage. If you look at the picture I took that day, you can see those transformed trousers and judge for yourself.

Reminiscences of events nearly thirty years past are often misleading and sometimes self serving, but I still regret the lack of enterprise shown by those "saurians" of the Ford Foundation, as Aldous himself called them in a letter to me. He asked them to provide a very modest support for a project with psychedelics, which he, John Smythies, Abram Hoffer, and I hoped to pursue. Had they done as he wished, we would have acquired a better working knowledge of these remarkable substances during a period of relative calm, for in retrospect there is something to be said for the supposed dullness of the Eisenhower years.

We planned to introduce some very talented people to psychedelics in a leisurely way and to use their reports as a source of information for gauging the best and safest way for employing these tools of mind expansion. Since Aldous's taste in human beings was so catholic, thanks to his longstanding interest in Jungian typology and his friendship with Dr. William Sheldon of somatotyping fame, we might have even recruited a few Ford executives and engineers. They could

have explored the universe of automobiles: Who knows, they might have discovered that their wheeled creations are not indigenous to Detroit and could be built anywhere in the world. They might have even paid more attention to what the Japanese were doing, but the "saurians," alas, were cautious, slow, short-sighted, and unimaginative in 1953.

Enough of hindsight and might-have-beens. What then? Aldous wrote so well and so much that even the best selections have gaps. As Samuel Johnson exclaimed when shown a volume called *The Beauties of Shakespeare*, "Pray sir, where are the other ten volumes?"

If nothing else, I can make certain that readers of this volume become acquainted with his brief, profound essay about human differences, wherein Aldous describes a walk he took in London about fifty years ago. Going down Arundel Street, he noticed that the *Christian World* was published at Number Seven, while the *Feathered World* was at Number Nine. He meditated on that great gulf that separates Christian from feathered folk, noting the chasm that divides members of different species. He then turned his attention to a single species—his own. Here are the last two hundred words or so of "A Meditation in Arundel Street":

> The gulf that separates the lover's, say, or the musician's world from the world of the chemist is deeper, more uncompromisingly unbridgeable than that which divides Anglo-Catholics from macaws or geese from Primitive Methodists. We cannot walk from one of these worlds into another; we can only jump. The last act of *Don Giovanni* is not deducible from electrons, or molecules, or even from cells and entire organs. In relation to these physical, chemical, and biological worlds it is simply a non sequitur. The whole of our universe is composed of a series of such non sequiturs. The only reason for supposing that there is in fact any connection between the logically and scientifically unrelated fragments of our experience is simply the fact that the experience is *ours*, that we have the fragments in our consciousness. These constellated worlds are all situated in the heaven of the human mind. Some day, conceivably, the scientific and logical engineers may build us convenient bridges from one world to another. Meanwhile we must be content to hop. *Solvitur saltando*. The only walking you can do in Arundel Street is along the pavements.

I first read this wonderful essay some years after his death, when his interest in the differences between human beings, about which he had often spoken, were beginning to preoccupy me. My colleagues and I

are starting to build some of the bridges between those constellated worlds that are situated in the heaven of the human mind. We believe that among other instruments needed for these endeavors are psychedelics. Indeed I once called them "the mindcraft of the noösphere," using the term developed by the philosopher-paleontologist, Teillard de Chardin, a great friend of Sir Julian Huxley, Aldous's elder brother. Like spacecraft, mindcraft must be used with crews who are well trained, with ground staff of high ability, planning operations and monitoring progress. It is not just a matter of shooting off rocket capsules into space and hoping for the best. Aldous's understanding of this is one of the major themes running through the selections of *Moksha*, a book I highly recommend for its profound insight into psychedelic and visionary experience.

Humphry Osmond

Preface

In The Mid-1950s when Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven* and *Hell* appeared, I found therein descriptions of experiences and the articulation of ideas which, since the discovery of LSD twelve years earlier, had constantly occupied my mind.

By that time scientific research along the broadest lines had already been carried out with LSD in medicine, biology, pharmacology, and psychiatry, and about one thousand papers had already been published. But it seemed to me a fundamental potentiality of this chemical agent had not yet been sufficiently considered or recognized, namely its ability to produce visionary experiences. I was therefore very pleased to learn that a person of such great literary and spiritual rank as Aldous Huxley, using mescaline which exhibits similar qualitative effects as LSD, had turned to a profound study of this phenomenon. Research on mescaline had been done as early as the turn of the century, but interest in this drug had afterwards largely diminished.

About the same time that Huxley carried out his experiments with mescaline, I held LSD sessions with the well-known German author Ernst Jünger in order to gain a more profound knowledge of the visionary experiences produced by the drug in the human mind. Ernst Jünger recorded his experiences in an essay entitled *Besuch auf Godenholm* (Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M., 1952), which gives in literary form the essence of his interpretations. On the other hand, Aldous Huxley in the aforementioned books not only provides a masterly description of his encounter with mescaline, but also an evaluation of this type of drug from the highest spiritual and mental point of view, taking into account sociological, aesthetic, and philosophical aspects.

Aldous Huxley indeed advocated the use of certain drugs, which led some people who studied his works superficially, or not at all, to reproach him with being to a certain extent guilty for the rising wave of drug abuse, or even of being a drug addict himself. This accusation has of course no justifiable basis, as Huxley has only dealt with substances for which Humphry Osmond has created the term "psychedelic." These are the psychotropic agents which had so far been denominated in scientific literature by the terms "phantastica," "hallucinogens," or "psychotomimetics." These are not narcotic addiction-producing substances like the opiate heroin, or like cocaine, with their ruinous consequences for body and mind of which Huxley

warned emphatically.

Psychotropic substances of plant origin had already been in use for thousands of years in Mexico as sacramental drugs in religious ceremonies and as magical potions having curative effects: The most important of these psychedelics are: mescaline, found in the *peyotl* cactus; psilocybin, which I have isolated from sacred Mexican mushrooms called *teonanacatl*; and, of course, LSD. Despite the fact that LSD (Lysergsäure-diäthylamid, lysergic acid diethylamide) is a semisynthetic substance which I have prepared in the laboratory from lysergic acid contained in ergot, a fungus growing on rye, from the viewpoint of its chemical constitution as well as its psychotropic mode of acting, it belongs to the group of Mexican sacramental drugs. This classification is further justified because we have found in another Mexican sacramental drug *ololiuqui* the active substances lysergic acid amide and lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, which are, as the chemical terms express, very closely related to lysergic acid diethylamide.

Ololiuqui is the Aztec denomination for the seeds of certain morning glory species. LSD can be regarded as an *ololiuqui* drug raised to higher potency because, whereas the active dose of the *ololiuqui* constituent lysergic acid amide amounts to 2 mg (0.002 g), a similar effect can be produced with as little as 0.05–0.1 mg of LSD.

There are the profound consciousness-altering psychic effects of *peyotl*, *teonanacatl*, and *ololiuqui* which made the Indians of the Latin American countries so respectful and awestruck of these drugs, causing these people to place a taboo on them. Only a ritually clean person, one prepared by a period of prayer and fasting, had the right and qualification to ingest these drugs and then only in such a purified body as their divine nature could develop, whereas the impure felt themselves going insane or mortally stricken.

It was the endeavor of Aldous Huxley to show how the inward power of these sacramental drugs could be used for the welfare of people living in a technological society hostile to mystical revelations. The collected essays and lectures in the present volume will promote better understanding of these ideas. In Huxley's view, the use of psychedelics should be part of a technique of "applied mysticism," which he described to me in a letter of February 29, 1962 as

> a technique for helping individuals to get the most out of their transcendental experience and to make use of their insights from the "other world" in the affairs of "this world." Meister Eckhart wrote that "what is taken in by contemplation must be given out in love." Essentially this is what must be developed—the art of giving out in love and intelligence what is taken in from vision

and the experience of self-transcendence and solidarity with the universe.

In his last and most touching book, the utopian novel *Island*, Aldous Huxley describes the kind of cultural structure in which the psychedelics—in his narration called “moksha-medicine”—could be applied in a beneficial manner. *Moksha* is therefore a very appropriate title for the present book, for which we have to be very grateful to the editors.

Albert Hofmann
Burg i.L.
Switzerland

Introduction

MOKSHA Is A collection of Aldous Huxley's writings taken largely from the last decade of his life. An appreciation of these addresses, essays and letters, and of the value he placed upon them, requires some introduction to the writer as well as to the written heritage he has left us. Aldous Leonard Huxley was born on July 26, 1894, into a notable literary and scientific family. He was the third son of Dr. Leonard Huxley—teacher, editor, man of letters—and of Julia Arnold, niece of the poet Matthew Arnold and sister of the novelist, Mrs. Humphrey Ward. He was the grandson of T. H. Huxley, the scientist, and the great-grandson of a formidable moralist, Dr. Thomas Arnold. His eldest brother, Julian, died February 21, 1975, ending that generation of world-recognized Huxleys.

Huxley's own writings best document his transition from poet to novelist to mystic to essayist to scientist. At the age of sixteen a disastrous eye infection left Huxley substantially blind, putting an end to a hoped-for medical career. Forced to depend upon braille for reading, a guide for walking, and a typewriter for writing, he considered his disability irreversible, and his early poems such as *The Defeat of Youth* (1918) and *Leda* (1920) express bitterness. However, the title poem of *The Cicadas* (1931) shows a recovery from this morbidness, and in a storm of productivity Huxley turned from poetry to the novel, shocking the reading public with *Chrome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925). He was compared with two contemporary literary rebels, Noel Coward and Richard Aldington; however, whereas these latter attacked the middle class without suggestions for improvement, Huxley's writings provided the seeds of constructive synthesis. In the collection of travel essays *Jesting Pilate* (1926) and his novel *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944), one can see the polish of phrase that was to become his signature, and catch glimpses of the philosophical concerns which were soon to command his attention.

Brave New World (1932) preceded George Orwell's 1984 by some twenty years and is today perhaps the best-known work of Huxley. A disturbingly large number of his prophecies have been fulfilled. In this novel Huxley presents a panacea-drug called Soma (Christianity without tears, morality in a bottle) which must be contrasted with his later creation Moksha (a process of education and enlightenment).

Huxley's view of the scientist, as one who bridges the disciplines of religion and philosophy with science, follows principles he had first laid down in *Time Must Have a Stop*. In this novel he carefully avoided

extremes of commitment: he felt that in a quest for truth and understanding, to have no hypothesis would deny one a motive or reason for experimentation, whereas to construct too elaborate a hypothesis would result in finding out what one knows to be there and ignoring all the rest. His "minimum working hypothesis" assumes the existence of a Godhead or Ground, a transcendent and immanent selflessness, with which one must become identified through love and knowledge.

The meeting with Dr. Humphry Osmond in 1953, which provided the crucible for Huxley's personal experiments in challenging this "minimum working hypothesis," is the logical starting place for this present collection of writings. Mescaline, then a little-studied drug found in the dumpling cactus *Anhalonium lewinii*, was to serve as the catalyst for this experiment. Mescaline was first isolated from the plant in 1894 by Heffter, first synthesized by Spath in 1919, and pharmacologically explored by Rouhier and Beringer in the middle 1920s. Yet by the early 1950s, only clinical and physiological studies had been recorded concerning the effects of this drug; there had been no literary or humanistic inquiry.

The results of Huxley's scientific-humanistic inquiry were profound and immediately apparent. The short-term consequences were the recording of the drug-induced experiences in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), and the elaboration upon these and their extrapolation to other consciousness phenomena in *Heaven and Hell* (1956). The longer term consequence of this experiment and the several that followed convinced Huxley of the soundness of his working hypothesis: that there was a Ground and it was the "everything that is happening everywhere in the universe," or better, the awareness of this "everything." He was fascinated by the potential in drugs such as mescaline, LSD, and psilocybin to provide a learning experience normally denied us within our educational system. His lectures, novels and essays repeated the theme of desperation and hope. In an article in *Playboy* (Nov. 1963) he expressed despair that "in a world of explosive population increase, of headlong, technological advance and of militant nationalism, the time at our disposal—for the discovery of new energy sources for overcoming our society's psychological inertia —is strictly limited." The hope, as expressed in his utopian fantasy *Island* (1962), is that "a substance akin to psilocybin could be used to potentiate the non-verbal education of adolescents and to remind adults that the real world is very different from the misshapen universe they have created for themselves by means of their culture-conditioned prejudices."

In *Island* the concept of such a drug is developed with the introduction of a fungus, Moksha. From its name it is apparent that it

is not the Soma presented in *Brave New World*; Moksha is derived from the Sanskrit word for "liberation" and Soma from the Greek for "body." In this book Huxley again precipitated controversy ahead of his time with his description of the death process as a learning process, and one which may be enriched by the administration of psychedelic drugs. The sincerity of this concept is evident in his ultimate experiment, in which he received two small doses of LSD, one several hours before death and a second just prior to death. In the last moments, he was conscious and peaceful.

During the last decade of his life, Huxley was intentionally controversial, yet he was desperately sincere. It is impossible to guess what he would write today, some fifteen years later, following the extensive proselytization for the use of psychedelic drugs that occured in the late 1960s. There was an explosive usage at that time, often by people who had not prepared themselves for the experience or for the personal integration of its values. Whatever he might have written, Huxley's role in literature and in the expression of the philosophy of consciousness expansion can never be denied.

Alexander T. Shulgin
Lafayette, California

"But he who contemplates the 3rd mantra of OM, i.e., views God as Himself, becomes illuminated and obtains moksha. Just as a serpent, relieved of its oldened skin, becomes new again, so the yogi who worships the 3rd mantra relieved of his mortal coil, of his sins and earthly weaknesses, and freed with his spiritual body to roam about throughout God's Universe, enjoys the glory of the All-Pervading Omniscient Spirit, ever and evermore. The contemplation of the last mantra blesses him with moksha or immortality."

From *The Mandukyopanishat being The Exposition of OM the Great Sacred Name of the Supreme Being in the Vedas.*
Trans. Pandit Guru, Datta Vidyarthi,
Prof, of Psychical Sciences, Lahore. Lahore, 1893.

"Open your eyes again and look at Nataraja up there on the altar. Look closely. In his upper right hand, as you've already seen, he holds the drum that calls the world into existence and in his upper left hand he carries the destroying fire. Life and death, order and disintegration,

impartially. But now look at Shiva's other pair of hands. The lower right hand is raised and the palm is turned outwards. What does that gesture signify? It signifies, 'Don't be afraid; it's All Right.' But how can anyone in his senses fail to be afraid, when it's so obvious that they're all wrong? Nataraja has the answer. Look now at his lower left hand. He's using it to point down at his feet. And what are his feet doing? Look closely and you'll see that the right foot is planted squarely on a horrible little subhuman creature—the demon, Muyalaka. A dwarf, but immensely powerful in his malignity, Muyalaka is the embodiment of ignorance, the manifestation of greedy, possessive selfhood. Stamp on him, break his back! And that's precisely what Nataraja is doing. Trampling the little monster down under his right foot. But notice that it isn't at this trampling right foot that he points his finger; it's at the left foot, the foot that, as he dances, he's in the act of raising from the ground. And why does he point at it? Why? That lifted foot, that dancing defiance of the force of gravity—it's the symbol of release, of Moksha, *of liberation. Nataraja dances in all the worlds at once—in the world of physics and chemistry, in the world of ordinary, all-too-human experience, in the world finally of Suchness, of Mind, of the Clear Light… ."*

From Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962)

The bronze sculpture of Nataraja is by Tamilnadu, 10th century, Chola Dynasty. Reproduced courtesy of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Anonymous Gift.

PART I

PRECOGNITION

Chapter 1

1931
A Treatise on Drugs
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Phantastica, *Louis Lewin's epochal survey of psychoactive drugs used around the world, made its English-language appearance in* 1931. *Sometime that year—either in London where his first play* The World of Light *was produced, or on the French Riviera where he was writing* Brave New World*—Aldous Huxley came upon this "unpromising-looking treasure" and "read it from cover to cover with a passionate and growing interest" It appears likely that Lewin's treatise served to introduce Huxley to the history of drugs and their effects, although 22 years would pass before he made the first experiment upon himself, with mescalin—and paid tribute to Lewin in the first line of the book resulting from that experiment. (There is no evidence to support Francis King's assertion that Aleister Crowley introduced Huxley to mescalin in Berlin in the* 1920s.) *Huxley's earliest printed text on drug-taking touches on themes he would return to again and again in his later work: the widespread and pervasive use of drugs, their importance in religious ceremony, man's predilection for occasional vacations from the everyday world, the problem of addiction, the failure of prohibition, and drugs of the future.*

THE OTHER DAY I discovered, dusty and neglected on one of the upper shelves of the local bookshop, a ponderous work by a German pharmacologist The price was not high; I paid and carried home the unpromising-looking treasure. It was a thick book, dense with matter and, in manner, a model of all that literary style should not be. Strictly, an unreadable book. Nevertheless, I read it from cover to cover with a passionate and growing interest. For this book was a kind of encyclopedia of drugs. Opium and its modern derivatives, morphia and heroin; cocaine and the Mexican peyotl; the hashish of India and the near East; the agaric of Siberia; the kawa of Polynesia; the betel of the East Indies; the now universal alcohol; the ether, the chloral, the veronal of the contemporary West—not one was omitted. By the time I had reached the last page, I knew something about the history, the geographical distribution, the mode of preparation and the physiological and psychological effects of all the delicious poisons, by

means of which men have constructed, in the midst of an unfriendly world, their brief and precarious paradises.

The story of drug-taking constitutes one of the most curious and also, it seems to me, one of the most significant chapters in the natural history of human beings. Everywhere and at all times, men and women have sought, and duly found, the means of taking a holiday from the reality of their generally dull and often acutely unpleasant existence. A holiday out of space, out of time, in the eternity of sleep or ecstasy, in the heaven or the limbo of visionary phantasy. "Anywhere, anywhere out of the world."

Drug-taking, it is significant, plays an important part in almost every primitive religion. The Persians and, before them, the Greeks and probably the ancient Hindus used alcohol to produce religious ecstasy; the Mexicans procured the beatific vision by eating a poisonous cactus; a toadstool filled the Shamans of Siberia with enthusiasm and endowed them with the gift of tongues. And so on. The devotional exercises of the later mystics are all designed to produce the drug's miraculous effects by purely psychological means. How many of the current ideas of eternity, of heaven, of supernatural states are ultimately derived from the experiences of drug-takers?

Primitive man explored the pharmaceutical avenues of escape from the world with a truly astonishing thoroughness. Our ancestors left almost no natural stimulant, or hallucinant, or stupefacient, undiscovered. Necessity is the mother of invention; primitive man, like his civilised descendant, felt so urgent a need to escape occasionally from reality, that the invention of drugs was fairly forced upon him.

All existing drugs are treacherous and harmful. The heaven into which they usher their victims soon turns into a hell of sickness and moral degradation. They kill, first the soul, then, in a few years, the body. What is the remedy? "Prohibition," answer all contemporary governments in chorus. But the results of prohibition are not encouraging. Men and women feel such an urgent need to take occasional holidays from reality, that they will do almost anything to procure the means of escape. The only justification for prohibition would be success; but it is not and, in the nature of things, cannot be successful. The way to prevent people from drinking too much alcohol, or becoming addicts to morphine or cocaine, is to give them an efficient but wholesome substitute for these delicious and (in the present imperfect world) necessary poisons. The man who invents such a substance will be counted among the greatest benefactors of suffering humanity.

Chapter 2

1931
Wanted, A New Pleasure
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Living on the French Riviera and observing the mores of a hedonistic society for whom alcohol and cocaine were the drugs of choice, Huxley in this short essay—a spin-off from the writing of Brave New World*—assumes a tone of playful irony in describing a "heavenly, world-transfiguring drug" that future scientists might create. The sensation nearest to the experience of the drug is the thrill of speed—meaning not, of course, some amphetamine-type reaction, but literally, fastness.*

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCIENCE discovered the technique of discovery, and our age is, in consequence, the age of inventions. Yes, the age of inventions; we are never tired of proclaiming the fact. The age of inventions—and yet nobody has succeeded in inventing a new pleasure.

It was in the course of a recent visit to that region which the Travel Agency advertisements describe as the particular home of pleasure—the French Riviera—that this curious and rather distressing fact first dawned on me. From the Italian frontier to the mountains of the Esterel, forty miles of Mediterranean coast have been turned into one vast 'pleasure resort' Or to be more accurate, they have been turned into one vast straggling suburb—the suburb of all Europe and the two Americas—punctuated here and there with urban nuclei, such as Mentone, Nice, Antibes, Cannes. The French have a genius for elegance; but they are also endowed with a genius for ugliness. There are no suburbs in the world so hideous as those which surround French cities. The great Mediterranean *banlieue* of the Riviera is no exception to the rule. The chaotic squalor of this long bourgeois slum is happily unique. The towns are greatly superior, of course, to their connecting suburbs. A certain pleasingly and absurdly old-fashioned, gimcrack grandiosity adorns Monte Carlo; Nice is large, bright, and lively; Cannes, gravely pompous and as though conscious of its expensive smartness. And all of them are equipped with the most elaborate and costly apparatus for providing their guests with pleasure.

It was while disporting myself, or rather while trying to disport

myself, in the midst of this apparatus, that I came to my depressing conclusion about the absence of new pleasures. The thought, I remember, occurred to me one dismal winter evening as I emerged from the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs at Cannes into one of those howling winds, half Alpine, half marine, which on certain days transform the Croisette and the Promenade des Anglais into the most painfully realistic imitations of Wuthering Heights. I suddenly realized that, so far as pleasures were concerned, we are no better off than the Romans or the Egyptians. Galileo and Newton, Faraday and Clerk Maxwell have lived, so far as human pleasures are concerned, in vain. The great joint-stock companies which control the modern pleasure industries can offer us nothing in any essential way different from the diversions which consuls offered to the Roman plebs or Trimalchio's panders could prepare for the amusement of the bored and jaded rich in the age of Nero. And this is true in spite of the movies, the talkies, the gramophone, the radio, and all similar modern apparatus for the entertainment of humanity. These instruments, it is true, are all essentially modern; nothing like them has existed before. But because the machines are modern it does not follow that the entertainments which they reproduce and broadcast are also modern. They are not. All that these new machines do is to make accessible to a larger public the drama, pantomime, and music which have from time immemorial amused the leisures of humanity.

These mechanically reproduced entertainments are cheap and are therefore not encouraged in pleasure resorts, such as those on the Riviera, which exist for the sole purpose of making travellers part with the maximum amount of money in the minimum space of time. In these places drama, pantomime, and music are therefore provided in the original form, as they were provided to our ancestors, without the interposition of any mechanical go-between. The other pleasures of the resorts are no less traditional. Eating and drinking too much; looking at half or wholly naked ballerinas and acrobats in the hope of stimulating a jaded sexual appetite; dancing; playing games and watching games, preferably rather bloody and ferocious games; killing animals—these have always been the sports of the rich and, when they had the chance, of the poor also. No less traditional is that other strange amusement so characteristic of the Riviera—gambling. Gambling must be at least as old as money; much older, I should imagine—as old as human nature itself, or at any rate as old as boredom, as old as the craving for artificial excitement and factitious emotions.

Officially, this closes the list of pleasures provided by the Riviera entertainment industries. But it must not be forgotten that, for those who pay for them, all these pleasures are situated, so to speak, in a

certain emotional field—in the pleasure-pain complex of snobbery. The fact of being able to buy admission to 'exclusive' (that is generally to say, expensive) places of entertainment gives most people a considerable satisfaction. They like to think of the poor and vulgar herd outside, just as, according to Tertullian and many other Fathers of the Church, the Blessed enjoy looking down from the balconies of Heaven on to the writhings of the Damned in the pit below. They like to feel, with a certain swelling of pride, that they are sitting among the elect, or that they are themselves the elect, whose names figure in the social columns of the Continental *Daily Mail,* or the Paris edition of the *New York Herald.* True, snobbery is often the source of excruciating pain. But it is no less the source of exquisite pleasures. These pleasures, I repeat, are liberally provided in all the resorts and constitute a kind of background to all the other pleasures.

Now all these pleasure-resort pleasures, including those of snobbery, are immemorially antique—variations, at the best, on traditional themes. We live in the age of inventions; but the professional discoverers have been unable to think of any wholly new way of pleasurably stimulating our senses or evoking agreeable emotional reactions.

But this, I went on to reflect, as I shouldered my way through the opposing gale on the Croisette, this is not, after all, so surprising. Our physiological make-up has remained very much what it was ten thousand years ago. True, there have been considerable changes in our mode of consciousness; at no time, it is obvious, are *all* the potentialities of the human psyche simultaneously realized; history is, among many other things, the record of the successive actualization, neglect, and reactualization in another context of different sets of these almost indefinitely numerous potentialities. But in spite of these changes (which it is customary to call, incorrectly, psychic evolution), the simple instinctive feelings to which, as well as to the senses, the purveyors of pleasure make their appeal, have remained remarkably stable. The task of the pleasure merchants is to provide a sort of Highest Common Denominator of entertainment that shall satisfy large numbers of men and women, irrespective of their psychological idiosyncrasies. Such an entertainment, it is obvious, must be very unspecialized. Its appeal must be to the simplest of shared human characteristics—to the physiological and psychological foundations of personality, not to personality itself. Now, the number of appeals that can be made to what I may call the Great Impersonalities common to all human beings is strictly limited—so strictly limited that, as it has turned out, our inventors have been unable hitherto to devise any new ones. (One doubtful example of a new pleasure exists; I shall speak of it later.) We are still content with the pleasures which charmed our

ancestors in the Bronze Age. (Incidentally, there are good reasons for regarding our entertainments as intrinsically inferior to those of the Bronze Age. Modern pleasures are wholly secular and without the smallest cosmic significance; whereas the entertainments of the Bronze Age were mostly religious rites and were felt by those who participated in them to be pregnant with important meanings.)

So far as I can see, the only possible new pleasure would be one derived from the invention of a new drug—of a more efficient and less harmful substitute for alcohol and cocaine. If I were a millionaire, I should endow a band of research workers to look for the ideal intoxicant. If we could sniff or swallow something that would, for five or six hours each day, abolish our solitude as individuals, atone us with our fellows in a glowing exaltation of affection and make life in all its aspects seem not only worth living, but divinely beautiful and significant, and if this heavenly, world-transfiguring drug were of such a kind that we could wake up next morning with a clear head and an undamaged constitution—then, it seems to me, all our problems (and not merely the one small problem of discovering a novel pleasure) would be wholly solved and earth would become paradise.

The nearest approach to such a new drug—and how immeasurably remote it is from the ideal intoxicant!—is the drug of speed. Speed, it seems to me, provides the one genuinely modern pleasure. True, men have always enjoyed speed; but their enjoyment has been limited, until very recent times, by the capacities of the horse, whose maximum velocity is not much more than thirty miles an hour. Now thirty miles an hour on a horse *feels* very much faster than sixty miles an hour in a train or a hundred in an aeroplane. The train is too large and steady, the aeroplane too remote from stationary surroundings, to give the passengers a very intense sensation of speed. The automobile is sufficiently small and sufficiently near the ground to be able to compete, as an intoxicating speed-purveyor, with the galloping horse. The inebriating effects of speed are noticeable, on horseback, at about twenty miles an hour, in a car at about sixty. When the car has passed seventy-two, or thereabouts, one begins to feel an unprecedented sensation—a sensation which no man in the days of horses ever felt. It grows intenser with every increase of velocity. I myself have never travelled at much more than eighty miles an hour in a car; but those who have drunk a stronger brewage of this strange intoxicant tell me that new marvels await any one who has the opportunity of passing the hundred mark. At what point the pleasure turns into pain, I do not know. Long before the fantastic Daytona figures are reached, at any rate. Two hundred miles an hour must be absolute torture.

But in this, of course, speed is like all other pleasures; indulged in to excess, they become their opposites. Each particular pleasure has its

corresponding particular pain, boredom, or disgust. The compensating drawback of too much speed-pleasure must be, I suppose, a horrible compound of intense physical discomfort and intense fear. No; if one must go in for excesses one would probably be better advised to be old-fashioned and stick to overeating.

Chapter 3

1932
Soma
ALDOUS HUXLEY

In his futuristic novel Brave New World, *a so-called "perfect drug" is commercially developed and marketed widely. Huxley called it* soma *after the oldest recorded drug, cited in the ancient Hindu scripture, the* Rig-Veda, *where it is regarded as an inebriating drink: "a very strong alcoholic beverage . . . obtained by fermentation of a plant and worshipped like the plant itself" (Lewin,* Phantastica, *p. 161).* R. G. *Wasson later attempted to show that the soma brew employed the psychoactive mushroom* Amanita muscaria. *In a* 1960 *interview, Huxley described the* soma *of his novel as "an imaginary drug" bearing no resemblance to mescalin or LSD, "with three different effects: euphoric, halluncinant, or sedative—an impossible combination."*

"WE HAVE THE World State now. And Ford's Day celebrations, and Community Sings, and Solidarity Services."

"Ford, how I hate them!" Bernard Marx was thinking.

"There was a thing called Heaven; but all the same they used to drink enormous quantities of alcohol."

"Like meat, like so much meat."

"There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality."

"Do ask Henry where he got it."

"But they used to take morphia and cocaine."

"And what makes it worse, she thinks of herself as meat."

"Two thousand pharmacologists and bio-chemists were subsidized in A.F. 178."

“He does look glum,” said the Assistant Predestinator, pointing at Bernard Marx.

“Six years later it was being produced commercially. The perfect drug.”

“Lets bait him.”

“Euphoric, narcotic, pleasantly hallucinant.”

“Glum, Marx, glum.” The clap on the shoulder made him start, look up. It was that brute Henry Foster. “What you need is a gramme of *soma”*

“All the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of thek defects.”

“Ford, I should like to kill him!” But all he did was to say, “No, thank you,” and fend off the proffered tube of tablets.

“Take a holiday from reality whenever you like, and come back without so much as a headache or a mythology.”

“Take it,” insisted Henry Foster, “take it.”

“Stability was practically assured.”

“One cubic centimetre cures ten gloomy sentiments,” said the Assistant Predestinator, citing a piece of homely hypnopædic wisdom.

“It only remained to conquer old age.”

“Damn you, damn you!” shouted Bernard Marx.

“Hoity-toity.”

“Gonadal hormones, transfusion of young blood, magnesium salts…”

“And do remember that a gramme is better than a damn.” They went out, laughing.

“All the physiological stigmata of old age have been abolished. And along with them, of course…”

“Don’t forget to ask him about that Malthusian belt,” said Fanny.

“Along with them all the old man’s mental peculiarities. Characters remain constant throughout a whole lifetime.”

“… two rounds of Obstacle Golf to get through before dark. I must fly.”

“Work, play—at sixty our powers and tastes are what they were at seventeen. Old men in the bad old days used to renounce, retire, take to religion, spend their time reading, thinking—*thinking!”*

“Idiots, swine!” Bernard Marx was saying to himself, as he walked down the corridor to the lift.

“Now—such is progress—the old men work, the old men copulate, the old men have no time, no leisure from pleasure, not a moment to sit down and think—or if ever by some unlucky chance such a crevice of time should yawn in the solid substance of their distractions, there is always *soma,* delicious *soma,* half a gramme for half-holiday, a gramme for a week-end, two grammes for a trip to the gorgeous East, three for a dark eternity on the moon; returning whence they find themselves on the other side of the crevice, safe on the solid ground of daily labour and distraction, scampering from feely to feely, from girl to pneumatic girl, from Electro-magnetic Gold Course to…”

… The group was now complete, the solidarity circle perfect and without flaw. Man, woman, man, in a ring of endless alternation round the table. Twelve of them ready to be made one, waiting to come together, to be fused, to lose their twelve separate identities in a larger being.

The President stood up, made the sign of the T and, switching on the synthetic music, let loose the soft indefatigable beating of drums and a choir of instruments—near-wind and super-string—that plangently repeated and repeated the brief and unescapably haunting melody of the first Solidarity Hymn. Again, again—and it was not the ear that heard the pulsing rhythm, it was the midriff; the wail and clang of those recurring harmonies haunted, not the mind, but the yearning bowels of compassion.

The President made another sign of the T and sat down. The service had begun. The dedicated *soma* tablets were placed in the centre of the dinner table. The loving cup of strawberry ice-cream *soma* was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula, “I drink to my

annihilation," twelves times quaffed. Then to the accompaniment of the synthetic orchestra the First Solidarity Hymn was sung.

Ford, we are twelve; oh, make us one,
Like drops within the Social River;
Oh, make us now together run
As swiftly as thy shining Flivver.

Twelve yearning stanzas. And then the loving cup was passed a second time. "I drink to the Greater Being" was now the formula. All drank. Tirelessly the music played. The drums beat. The crying and clashing of the harmonies were an obsession in the melted bowels. The Second Solidarity Hymn was sung.

Come, Greater Being, Social Friend,
Annihilating Twelve-in-One!
We long to die, for when we end,
Our larger life has but begun.

Again twelve stanzas. By this time the *soma* had begun to work. Eyes shone, cheeks were flushed, the inner light of universal benevolence broke out on every face in happy, friendly smiles. Even Bernard felt himself a little melted. When Morgana Rothschild turned and beamed at him, he did his best to beam back. But the eyebrow, that black two-in-one—alas, it was still there; he couldn't ignore it, couldn't however hard he tried. The melting hadn't gone far enough. Perhaps if he had been sitting between Fifi and Joanna… . For the third time the loving cup went round. "I drink to the imminence of His Coming," said Morgana Rothschild, whose turn it happened to be to initiate the circular rite. Her tone was loud, exultant. She drank and passed the cup to Bernard. "I drink to the imminence of His Coming," he repeated, with a sincere attempt to feel that the coming was imminent; but the eyebrow continued to haunt him, and the Coming, so far as he was concerned, was horribly remote. He drank and handed the cup to Clara Deterding. "It'll be a failure again," he said to himself. "I know it will." But he went on doing his best to beam.

The loving cup had made its circuit. Lifting his hand, the President gave a signal; the chorus broke out into the third Solidarity Hymn.

Feel how the Greater Being comes!
Rejoice and, in rejoicings, die!
Melt in the music of the drums!
For I am you and you are I.

Chapter 4

1936
Propaganda And Pharmacology
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Brainwashing was a subject to which Huxley returned again and again. The rise of Fascism in the 1930s occasioned a long essay from his pen, "Writers and Readers," which includes a passage on the latest chemical methods of mind-rape. Even after his positive experiences with psychedelic substances two decades later, he continued to warn against the phenomenon of "pharmacological attack."

… THE PROPAGANDISTS of the future will probably be chemists and physiologists as well as writers. A cachet containing three-quarters of a gramme of chloral and three-quarters of a milligram of scopolamine will produce in the person who swallows it a state of complete psychological malleability, akin to the state of a subject under deep hypnosis. Any suggestion made to the patient while in this artificially induced trance penetrates to the very depths of the sub-conscious mind and may produce a permanent modification in the habitual modes of thought and feeling. In France, where the technique has been in experimental use for several years, it has been found that two or three courses of suggestion under chloral and scopolamine can change the habits even of the victims of alcohol and irrepressible sexual addictions. A peculiarity of the drug is that the amnesia which follows it is retrospective; the patient has no memories of a period which begins several hours *before* the drug's administrations. Catch a man unawares and give him a cachet; he will return to consciousness firmly believing all the suggestions you have made during his stupor and wholly unaware of the way this astonishing conversion has been effected. A system of propaganda, combining pharmacology with literature, should be completely and infallibly effective. The thought is extremely disquieting… .

Chapter 5

1944
A Boundless Absence
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Huxley's novel Time Must Have a Stop *contains a remarkable and prophetic description of a post-death state that strongly resembles ego-annihilation under a moderate to strong psychedelic.*

THERE WAS NO pain any longer, no more need to gasp for breath, and the tiled floor of the lavatory had ceased to be cold and hard.

All sound had died away, and it was quite dark. But in the void and the silence there was still a kind of knowledge, a faint awareness.

Awareness not of a name or person, not of things present, not of memories of the past, not even of here or there—for there was no place, only an existence whose single dimension was this knowledge of being ownerless and without possessions and alone.

The awareness knew only itself, and itself only as the absence of something else.

Knowledge reached out into the absence that was its object. Reached out into the darkness, further and further. Reached out into the silence. Illimitably. There were no bounds.

The knowledge knew itself as a boundless absence within another boundless absence, which was not even aware.

It was the knowledge of an absence ever more total, more excruciatingly a privation. And it was aware with a kind of growing hunger, but a hunger for something that did not exist; for the knowledge was only of absence, of pure and absolute absence.

Absence endured through ever-lengthening durations. Durations of restlessness. Durations of hunger. Durations that expanded and expanded as the frenzy of insatiability became more and more intense, that lengthened out into eternities of despair.

Eternities of the insatiable, despairing knowledge of absence within absence, everywhere, always, in an existence of only one dimension…

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And then abruptly there was another dimension, and the everlasting ceased to be the everlasting.

That within which the awareness of absence knew itself, that by which it was included and interpenetrated, was no longer an absence,

but had become the presence of another awareness. The awareness of absence knew itself known.

In the dark silence, in the void of all sensation, something began to know it. Very dimly at first, from immeasurably far away. But gradually the presence approached. The dimness of that other knowledge grew brighter. And suddenly the awareness had become an awareness of light. The light of the knowledge by which it was known.

In the awareness that there was something other than absence the anxiety found appeasement, the hunger found satisfaction.

Instead of privation there was this light. There was this knowledge of being known. And this knowledge of being known was a satisfied, even a joyful knowledge.

Yes, there was joy in being known, in being thus included within a shining presence, in thus being interpenetrated by a shining presepce.

And because the awareness was included by it, interpenetrated by it, there was identification with it. The awareness was not only known by it but knew with its knowledge.

Knew, not absence, but the luminous denial of absence, not privation, but bliss.

There was hunger still. Hunger for yet more knowledge of a yet more total denial of an absence.

Hunger, but also the satisfaction of hunger, also bliss. And then as the light increased, hunger again for profounder satisfactions, for a bliss more intense.

Bliss and hunger, hunger and bliss. And through everlengthening durations the light kept brightening from beauty into beauty. And the joy of knowing, the joy of being known, increased with every increment of that embracing and interpenetrating beauty.

Brighter, brighter, through succeeding durations, that expanded at last into an eternity of joy.

An eternity of radiant knowledge, of bliss unchanging in its ultimate intensity. For ever, for ever.

But gradually the unchanging began to change.

The light increased its brightness. The presence became more urgent. The knowledge more exhaustive and complete.

Under the impact of that intensification, the joyful awareness of being known, the joyful participation in that knowledge, was pinned against the limits of its bliss. Pinned with an increasing pressure until at last the limits began to give way and the awareness found itself beyond them, in another existence. An existence where the knowledge of being included within a shining presence had become a knowledge of being oppressed by an excess of light. Where that transfiguring interpenetration was apprehended as a force disruptive from within. Where the knowledge was so penetratingly luminous that the

participation in it was beyond the capacity of that which participated.

The presence approached, the light grew brighter.

Where there had been eternal bliss there was an immensely prolonged uneasiness, an immensely prolonged duration of pain and, longer and yet longer, as the pain increased, durations of intolerable anguish. The anguish of being forced, by participation, to know more than it was possible for the participant to know. The anguish of being crushed by the pressure of too much light—crushed into ever-increasing density and opacity. The anguish, simultaneously, of being broken and pulverized by the thrust of that interpenetrating knowledge from within. Disintegrated into smaller and smaller fragments, into mere dust, into atoms of mere nonentity.

And this dust and the ever-increasing denseness of that opacity were apprehended by the knowledge in which there was participation as being hideous. Were judged and found repulsive, a privation of all beauty and reality.

Inexorably, the presence approached, the light grew brighter.

And with every increase of urgency, every intensification of that invading knowledge from without, that disruptive brightness thrusting from within, the agony increased, the dust and the compacted darkness became more shameful, were known, by participation, as the most hideous of absences.

Shameful everlastingly in an eternity of shame and pain.

But the light grew brighter, agonizingly brighter.

The whole of existence was brightness—everything except this one small clot of untransparent absence, except these dispersed atoms of a nothingness that, by direct awareness, knew itself as opaque and separate, and at the same time, by an excruciating participation in the light knew itself as the most hideous and shameful of privations.

Brightness beyond the limits of the possible, and then a yet intenser, nearer incandescence, pressing from without, disintegrating from within. And at the same time there was this other knowledge, ever more penetrating and complete, as the light grew brighter, of a clotting and a disintegration that seemed progressively more shameful as the durations lengthened out interminably.

There was no escape, an eternity of no escape. And through ever longer, through ever-decelerating durations, from impossible to impossible, the brightness increased, came more urgently and agonizingly close.

Suddenly there was a new contingent knowledge, a conditional awareness that, if there were no participation in the brightness, half the agony would disappear. There would be no perception of the ugliness of this clotted or disintegrated privation. There would only be an untransparent separateness, self-known as other than the invading

light.

An unhappy dust of nothingness, a poor little harmless clot of mere privation, crushed from without, scattered from within, but still resisting, still refusing, in spite of the anguish, to give up its right to a separate existence.

Abruptly, there was a new and overwhelming flash of participation in the light, in the agonizing knowledge that there was no such right as a right to separate existence, that this clotted and disintegrated absence was shameful and must be denied, must be annihilated—held up unflinchingly to the radiance of that invading knowledge and utterly annihilated, dissolved in the beauty of that impossible in candescence.

For an immense duration the two awarenesses hung as though balanced—the knowledge that knew itself separate, knew its own right to separateness, and the knowledge that knew the shamefulness of absence and the necessity for its agonizing annihilation in the light.

As though balanced, as though on a knife-edge between an impossible intensity of beauty and an impossible intensity of pain and shame, between a hunger for opacity and separateness and absence and a hunger for a yet more total participation in the brightness.

And then, after an eternity, there was a renewal of that contingent and conditional knowledge: “If there were no participation in the brightness, if there were no participation… .”

And all at once there was no longer any participation. There was a self-knowledge of the clot and the disintegrated dust; and the light that knew these things was another knowledge. There was still the agonizing invasion from within and without, but no shame any more, only a resistance to attack, a defense of rights.

By degrees the brightness began to lose some of its intensity, to recede, as it were, to grow less urgent. And suddenly there was a kind of eclipse. Between the insufferable light and the suffering awareness of the light as a presence alien to this clotted and disintegrated privation, something abruptly intervened. Something in the nature of an image, something partaking of a memory.

An image of things, a memory of things. Things related to things in some blessedly familiar way that could not yet be clearly apprehended.

Almost completely eclipsed, the light lingered faintly and insignificantly on the fringes of awareness. At the centre were only things.

Things still unrecognized, not fully imagined or remembered, without name or even form, but definitely there, definitely opaque.

And now that the light had gone into eclipse and there was no participation, opacity was no more shameful. Density was happily

aware of density, nothingness of untransparent nothingness. The knowledge was without bliss, but profoundly reassuring.

And gradually the knowledge became clearer and the things known, more definite and familiar. More and more familiar, until awareness hovered on the verge of recognition.

A clotted thing here, a disintegrated thing there. But what things? And what were these corresponding opacities by which they were being known?

There was a vast duration of uncertainty, a long, long groping in a chaos of unmanifested possibilities.

Then abruptly it was Eustace Barnack who was aware. Yes, this opacity was Eustace Barnack, this dance of agitated dust was Eustace Barnack. And the clot outside himself, this other opacity of which he had the image, was his cigar. He was remembering his Romeo and Juliet as it had slowly disintegrated into blue nothingness between his fingers. And with the memory of the cigar came the memory of a phrase: “Backwards and downwards.” And then the memory of laughter.

Words in what context? Laughter at whose expense? There was no answer. Just “backwards and downwards” and that stump of disintegrating opacity. “Backwards and downwards,” and then the cachinnation, and the sudden glory.

Far off, beyond the image of that brown slobbered cylinder of tobacco, beyond the repetition of those three words and the accompanying laughter the brightness lingered, like a menace. But in his joy at having found again this memory of things, this knowledge of an identity remembering, Eustace Barnack had all but ceased to be aware of its existence.

Chapter 6

1952
Downward Transcendence
ALDOUS HUXLEY

In an epilogue to The Devils of Loudun, *his historical account of mass hysteria and exorcism in a 17th-century French convent, Huxley drew on the ideas of Philippe de Félice in* Foules en Delire, Ecstases Collectives, *that there were three kinds of self-transcendence: downward, upward, and horizontal. Drug-taking, elemental sexuality, and herd poisoning were avenues toward the first category. Chemical methods of self-transcendence gave at best only momentary revelation and at considerable cost. After taking mescalin, however, he wrote (to Osmond) of his belief that this drug "can be used to raise the horizontal self-transcendence which goes on within purposive groups … so that it becomes an upward transcendence… ."*

WITHOUT AN UNDERSTANDING of man's deep-seated urge to self-transcendence, of his very natural reluctance to take the hard, ascending way, and his search for some bogus liberation either below or to one side of his personality, we cannot hope to make sense of our own particular period of history or indeed of history in general, of life as it was lived in the past and as it is lived today. For this reason I propose to discuss some of the more common Grace-substitutes, into which and by means of which men and women have tried to escape from the tormenting consciousness of being merely themselves.

In France there is now one retailer of alcohol to every hundred inhabitants, more or less. In the United States there are probably at least a million desperate alcoholics, besides a much larger number of very heavy drinkers whose disease has not yet become mortal. Regarding the consumption of intoxicants in the past we have no precise or statistical knowledge. In Western Europe, among the Celts and Teutons, and throughout medieval and early modern times, the individual intake of alcohol was probably even greater than it is today. On the many occasions when we drink tea, or coffee, or soda pop, our ancestors refreshed themselves with wine, beer, mead and, in later centuries, with gin, brandy and usquebaugh. The regular drinking of water was a penance imposed on wrongdoers, or accepted by the religious, along with occasional vegetarianism, as a very severe

mortification. Not to drink an intoxicant was an eccentricity sufficiently remarkable to call for comment and the using of a more or less disparaging nickname. Hence such patronymics as the Italian Bevilacqua, the French Boileau and the English Drinkwater.

Alcohol is but one of the many drugs employed by human beings as avenues of escape from the insulated self. Of the natural narcotics, stimulants and hallucinators there is, I believe, not a single one whose properties have not been known from time immemorial. Modern research has given us a host of brand new synthetics; but in regard to the natural poisons it has merely developed better methods of extracting, concentrating and recombining those already known. From poppy to curare, from Andean coca to Indian hemp and Siberian agaric, every plant or bush or fungus capable, when ingested, of stupefying or exciting or evoking visions, has long since been discovered and systematically employed. The fact is strangely significant; for it seems to prove that, always and everywhere, human beings have felt the radical inadequacy of their personal existence, the misery of being their insulated selves and not something else, something wider, something in Wordsworthian phrase, "far more deeply interfused." Exploring the world around him, primitive man evidently "tried all things and held fast to that which was good." For the purpose of self-preservation the good is every edible fruit and leaf, every wholesome seed, root and nut. But in another context—the context of self-dissatisfaction and the urge to self-transcendence—the good is everything in nature by means of which the quality of individual consciousness can be changed. Such drug-induced changes may be manifestly for the worse, may be at the price of present discomfort and future addiction, degeneration and premature death. All this is of no moment. What matters is the awareness, if only for an hour or two, if only for a few minutes, of being someone or, more often, something other than the insulated self. "I live, yet not I, but wine or opium or peyotl or hashish liveth in me." To go beyond the limits of the insulated ego is such a liberation that, even when self-transcendence is through nausea into frenzy, through cramps into hallucinations and coma, the drug-induced experience has been regarded by primitives and even by the highly civilized as intrinsically divine. Ecstasy through intoxication is still an essential part of the religion of many African, South American and Polynesian peoples. It was once, as the surviving documents clearly prove, a no less essential part of the religion of the Celts, the Teutons, the Greeks, the peoples of the Middle East and the Aryan conquerors of India. It is not merely that "beer does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man." Beer *is* the god. Among the Celts, Sabazius was the devine name given to the felt alienation of being dead drunk on ale. Further to the south,

Dionysos was, among other things, the supernatural objectification of the psychophysical effects of too much wine. In Vedic mythology, Indra was the god of that now unidentifiable drug called *soma.* Hero, slayer of dragons, he was the magnified projection upon heaven of the strange and glorious otherness experienced by the intoxicated. Made one with the drug, he becomes, as Soma-Indra, the source of immortality, the mediator between the human and the divine.

In modern times beer and the other toxic short cuts to self-transcendence are no longer officially worshipped as gods. Theory has undergone a change, but not practice; for in practice millions upon millions of civilized men and women continue to pay their devotions, not to the liberating and transfiguring Spirit, but to alcohol, to hashish, to opium and its derivatives, to the barbiturates, and the other synthetic additions to the age-old catalogue of poisons capable of causing self-transcendence. In every case, of course, what seems a god is actually a devil, what seems a liberation is in fact an enslavement. The self-transcendence is invariably downward into the less than human, the lower than personal…

To what extent, and in what circumstances, it is possible for a man to make use of the descending road as a way to spiritual self-transcendence? At first sight it would seem obvious that the way down is not and can never be the way up. But in the realm of existence matters are not quite so simple as they are in our beautifully tidy world of words. In actual life a downward movement may sometimes be made the beginning of an ascent. When the shell of the ego has been cracked and there begins to be a consciousness of the subliminal and physiological othernesses underlying personality, it sometimes happens that we catch a glimpse, fleeting but apocalyptic, of that other Otherness, which is the Ground of all being. So long as we are confined within our insulated selfhood, we remain unaware of the various not-selves with which we are associated—the organic not-self, the subconscious not-self, the collective not-self of the psychic medium in which all our thinking and feeling have their existence, and the immanent and transcendent not-self of the Spirit. Any escape, even by a descending road, out of insulated selfhood makes possible at least a momentary awareness of the not-self on every level, including the highest. William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* gives instances of “anaesthetic revelations,”[1] following the inhalation of laughing gas. Similar theophanies are sometimes experienced by alcoholics, and there are probably moments in the course of intoxication by almost any drug, when awareness of a not-self superior to the disintegrating ego becomes briefly possible. But these occasional flashes of revelation are bought at an enormous price. For

the drug-taker, the moment of spiritual awareness (if it comes at all) gives place very soon to subhuman stupor, frenzy or hallucination, followed by dismal hangovers and, in the long run, by a permanent and fatal impairment of bodily health and mental power. Very occasionally a single “anaesthetic revelation” may act, like any other theophany, to incite its recipient to an effort of self-transformation and upward self-transcendence. But the fact that such a thing sometimes happens can never justify the employment of chemical methods of self-transcendence. This is a descending road and most of those who take it will come to a state of degradation, where periods of subhuman ecstasy alternate with periods of conscious selfhood so wretched that any escape, even if it be into the slow suicide of drug addiction, will seem preferable to being a person.

PART II

PSYCHEDELIC AND VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

Chapter 7

1953
Letters

Dr. Humphry Osmond was a research psychiatrist studying the relationship between the mescalin experience and schizophrenia at the University of Saskatchewan when he and Huxley first met. Huxley's invitation to Dr. Osmond and his anticipation of taking mescalin are documented in the following letters.

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 623]

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740 N. Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
10 April, 1953

DEAR DR. OSMOND,

Thank you for your interesting letter and accompanying article, and for the very kind and understanding things you say of my *Devils*. It looks as though the most satisfactory working hypothesis about the human mind must follow, to some extent, the Bergsonian model, in which the brain with its associated normal self, acts as a utilitarian device for limiting, and making selections from, the enormous possible world of consciousness, and for canalizing experience into biologically profitable channels. Disease, mescaline, emotional shock, aesthetic experience and mystical enlightenment have the power, each in its different way and in varying degrees, to inhibit the functions of the normal self and its ordinary brain activity, thus permitting the "other world" to rise into consciousness. The basic problem of education is, How to make the best of both worlds-the world of biological utility and common sense, and the world of unlimited experience underlying it. I suspect that the complete solution of the problem can come only to those who have learned to establish themselves in the third and ultimate world of 'the spirit', the world which subtends and interpenetrates both of the other worlds. But short of this ultimate solution, there may be partial solutions, by means of which the growing child may be taught to preserve his "intimations of immortality" into adult life. Under the current dispensation the vast majority of individuals lose, in the course of education, all the

openness to inspiration, all the capacity to be aware of other things than those enumerated in the Sears-Roebuck catalogue which constitutes the conventionally "real" world. That this is not the necessary and inevitable price extorted for biological survival and civilized efficiency is demonstrated by the existence of the few men and women who retain their contact with the other world, even while going about their business in this. Is it too much to hope that a system of education may some day be devised, which shall give results, in terms of human development, commensurate with the time, money, energy and devotion expended? In such a system of education it may be that mescaline or some other chemical substance may play a part by making it possible for young people to 'taste and see' what they have learned about at second hand, or directly but at a lower level of intensity, in the writings of the religious, or the works of poets, painters and musicians.

I hope very much that there may be a chance of seeing you in these parts during the Psychiatric Congress in May. One of the oddest fish you will meet at the congress will be a friend of ours, Dr. [—], who is perhaps the greatest living virtuoso in hypnosis. (Incidentally, for some people at least, deep hypnotic trance is a way that leads into the other world—a less dramatic way than that of mescaline inasmuch as the experiences are entirely inward and do not associate themselves with sensory perceptions and the character of things and people 'out there' but still very definitely a way.) If you are coming along to the meeting, we can provide a bed and bath—but unfortunately the accommodation is too small for more than one. You will be free to come and go as it suits you, and there will always be something to eat —though it may be a bit sketchy on the days when we don't have a cook. In any case I look forward to seeing you and to the opportunity of discussing at greater length some of the problems raised in your letter and the articles by Dr. Smythies and yourself.

Yours sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 624]

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740 N. Kings Rd.,
L A *46, Cal.*
19 April, 1953

DEAR DR. OSMOND,
Good! We shall expect you on the third. May I suggest that you take

the air line bus to the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, from which we can come and retrieve you—or from which it is easy to take a cab. Going to meet planes at the air port has become such a nightmare, with the increase of traffic, that my wife, who drives the car, begs everyone to come as far as the Roosevelt—which is quicker for the traveller as well as easier for the meeter.

Hoffmann La Roche has told my young doctor friend that they must send to Switzerland for a supply of mescaline—so it may be weeks before it get here. Meanwhile do you have any of the stuff on hand? If so I hope you can bring a little; for I am eager to make the experiment and would feel particularly happy to do so under the supervision of an experienced investigator like yourself.

Yours very sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

Chapter 8

1953
May Morning In Hollywood
DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND

Here Dr. Osmond recounts "that improbable journey" that took him to Los Angeles with a dose (0.4 g) *of mescalin for Huxley, whom he guided on the trip immortalized in* Doors of Perception. *The classic anxieties of the guide are humorously expressed: though Aldous "seemed like an ideal subject," Osmond momentarily feared he would become known as "the man who drove Aldous Huxley mad" Osmond remained one of Huxley's closest friends during his last decade; many of Huxley's most important letters pertaining to psychedelics are addressed to him.*

IT IS ELEVEN years now since I made that improbable journey to Hollywood. I was working in a mental hospital on the Canadian Prairies over 2,000 miles away. Although I had kept a copy of Aldous Huxley's splendid anthology *Texts and Pretexts* by me during the London blitz, on Atlantic convoys in a destroyer escort, and it still goes with me on my wanderings, I had never expected to meet its formidable author. Indeed, had I thought about it, I would have doubted whether we would have much in common, for then as now, my main interest and pre-occupation was the care, treatment and betterment of patients suffering from schizophrenia.

Dr. John Smythies[1] and I had collaborated in a piece for the *Hibbert Journal*[2] on the present state of psychological medicine. Aldous read it; enjoyed it; and sent us a characteristically friendly and encouraging letter written in his bold black hand that sloped slightly across the paper. He added that he hoped we would visit him when we were next in California. Neither John nor I were sufficiently acclimatized to North America to feel that 2,000–3,000 miles was not a particular barrier to meeting; that was before the jet plane had eroded our spatial sense entirely.

However, within about a month of that first letter, I was on my way to California to be the guest of Aldous and Maria Huxley. I had been sent quite unexpectedly to attend the American Psychiatric Association meeting then being held in Los Angeles. I remember feeling both a little embarrassed and proud when I said that I would

not need an hotel because I should be staying with them.

Maria told me how it came about. One morning at breakfast, Aldous looked up from his mail and said, “Let’s ask this fellow Osmond to stay.” Maria was surprised because Aldous rarely suggested asking anyone to stay and she had never heard of “this fellow.” Aldous enlightened her, “He’s a Canadian psychiatrist who works with mescalin.” Maria replied, “But he may have a beard and we may not like him.” Aldous thought for a bit, and said, “If we don’t like him we can always be out.” Maria did not feel this was a good solution. However, Aldous’s invitation indicated that, although I would be very welcome to stay, the nature of his work made it necessary for both of them to be out a great deal. I was intrigued, especially since he stated that he was interested in our work and might even become a subject if that were possible. I was also apprehensive, but my wife pointed out, “It will only be for a few days, and you can always be kept late by an A.P.A. session.”

The invitation was an honour and an opportunity. I was most curious to meet this notable man whose ideas I had criticized from a safe distance, but I am not a literary person and found the prospect daunting. I reached the Huxleys’ home on Kings Road not far from Sunset Boulevard, tired and worried. I had not been able to find out about the rules of bringing mescalin into the United States. When I discovered them some years later I realized I had reason to be concerned. I also felt shy and awkward; I doubted whether I could sustain the sort of talk to which I supposed the Huxleys were used.

Maria put me at ease immediately. She was not at all formidable. On her part, she was relieved that I was beardless. She said: “I knew that you and Aldous, being Englishmen, would get along well.” To Maria, Englishmen were largely incomprehensible except to each other.

Aldous glided towards me from the cool darkness of the house into the sunshine of the front porch. He seemed to be suspended a fraction of an inch above the ground like one of Blake’s allegorical figures. He was very tall. His head was massive, finely shaped, with a splendid brow. His gaze, from his better eye, was keen and piercing, but seemed to be focused a little above and below me. His handshake was sketchy and uncertain, as if he did not enjoy the custom, and this was indeed so, for the thin-skinned, lightly built, slender people whom Sheldon calls cerebrotonic do not relish physical contact overmuch. His voice was clear and beautifully modulated with a penetrating, almost birdlike, quality of which I became fully aware a few days later at the A.P.A. meeting. We were standing in the foyer outside the main hall when Aldous’s voice cut through the hubbub like a knife-blade, “But Humphry, how incredible it is in a Marxist country like this…” It

was 1953 at the height of the McCarthy era. Marxist was a diabolical word in the city of the angels.

What impressed me from the start and continued to do so through the years of our friendship was the kindness and tolerance of this man, whose writings had sometimes led me to suppose that he would be disillusioned, cynical and even savage.

It took some time to understand that Bertie meant Bertrand Russell, that Tom Eliot was T. S. Eliot, and Lawrence was, of course, D. H. Maria told me that when she was typing the manuscript of *Lady Chatterley,* Lawrence came to her one day distressed and embarrassed. He blurted out, "Maria, you must never use that word again." Maria asked what this forbidden word might be and Lawrence with reluctance spoke the now familiar four-letter word. "But Lawrence," she protested, "you're always using it in *Lady Chatterley.* Besides it is a very good word." Lawrence explained gently that she must no longer use the word because, "It would shock Aldous. ft is not a good word at all, and anyway it would never do." Maria was puzzled because Aldous had not seemed in the least distressed by the word, but since Lawrence clearly was, she stopped using it. They both always spoke very warmly of Lawrence.

I had expected Aldous to be well informed, but from the first meeting to our final one in Stockholm last year, I never ceased to be astounded and delighted by the range, boldness, flexibility and sheer playfulness of his splendid mind. When he was at ease he would toss ideas about with the grace, elegance and sense of fun that a trained dolphin has playing with a ball. Whether we were at a scientific meeting, sight-seeing in New York, visiting the great burying-ground of Forest Lawn, walking on the Surrey Commons which he loved so much, bowling along the Mohave desert, threading our way towards the Athenaecum where, he said, "You can hardly hear yourself think for the whine of political, academic and ecclesiastical axes being ground," or on a shopping expedition to Ohrbach's, Aldous would be discussing both serious and trivial matters with his immense fund of expert knowledge. He loved a good gossip, on every variety of subject —the latest scientific discovery, theological principles, books, paintings, new developments in sewage treatment, Utopias, the water-supply system of Los Angeles (a particular favourite of his), the effect of mass-produced clothing on social and political systems, parapsychology, or the future of megalopolis—always provided that it gave him occasion to reflect and comment upon the infinite strangeness of life. Although he was very well informed he was always learning more, and the best tribute one could get was his delighted, "How absolutely incredible!"

Those who did not know him, or were not well acquainted with the

particular subject he was discussing, might be misled into supposing that his knowledge was superficial, for he wore his great learning lightly and was never pompous. He looked upon himself as an educated man doing his best to keep up with the times in which he lived, and thought it was natural that he should do so. I think he was well aware that he was immensely intelligent and gifted, but he did not consider this something for pride or conceit. What he was proud of was that he could earn his living by his pen, an occupation which he enjoyed and for which he had a craftsman's love and concern. He looked upon himself as a writer who should be able to communicate with all kinds of people, not only the sophisticated or the erudite. He never felt it beneath him to write for the films or popular magazines. At one time he was planning to turn *Brave New World* into a musical because he thought its ideas would get across better that way. He wrote for *Playboy* and *Daedalus,* for *Life* and *Encounter,* and considered they were equally acceptable channels of communicating with people. He wrote to and enjoyed meeting interesting men and women everywhere and seemed equally at home with sages, scientists, millionaires, gurus, playwrights and administrators as with the crankiest and oddest people. And they all seemed to find enormous enjoyment in his critical, detached, wise, yet kindly and enthusiastic intelligence.

I took Aldous to one of the main sessions of the conference. He sat there paying the keenest attention, crossing himself devoutly every time Freud's name was mentioned. In *Brave New World,* the Saviour was called "Our Ford," or as certain people for some unexplained reason preferred to call him, "Our Freud." Here was a congregation, including many pious Freudians, so Aldous was kept busy. Luckily my psychiatric colleagues were so absorbed by the incantations that no one noticed him.

When the meeting ended, mescalin came up, for I had admitted bringing some with me. Maria assured me that Aldous was looking forward to taking it, for she had guessed correctly that "you Englishmen" had avoided discussing the matter. Their family doctor was not opposed. Aldous had no liver disease. In spite of remarks that I sometimes heard about "unfortunate mystical trends in his later years," I found him, both then and subsequently, shrewd, matter-of-fact and to the point; but of course the history of mysticism, in spite of popular notions to the contrary, concerns large numbers of practical, hard-headed and socially effective people.

Aldous had got a dictaphone for the occasion. I could see no decent way out and we agreed to do the experiment. I had a restless night. Next morning, as I stirred the water and watched the silvery white mescalin crystals swirling down and dissolving with a slightly oily

slick, I wondered whether it would be enough or too much. It was a delicious May morning in Hollywood, no hint of smog to make the eyes smart, not too hot. Yet I was uneasy. Aldous and Maria would be sad if it did not work, but what if it worked too well? Should I cut the dose in half? The setting could hardly have been better, Aldous seemed an ideal subject, Maria eminently sensible, and we had all taken to each other, which was very important for a good experience; but I did not relish the possibility, however remote, of being the man who drove Aldous Huxley mad. My fears were groundless. The bitter chemical did not work as quickly as Aldous had rather impatiently expected. It slowly etched away the patina of conceptual thinking; the doors of perception were cleansed, and Aldous perceived things with less interference from his enormous rationalizing brain. Within two and a half hours I could see that it was acting and after three I knew that all would go well. Aldous and Maria were greatly pleased. So was I, as well as being much relieved.

Three days later I flew back to Canada to find the prairies gripped in a late blizzard. I had enjoyed myself and looked forward to Aldous's report, which he worked up into a widely known book—The *Doors of Perception.* From then on we usually saw each other at least once a year and were always writing. I have by me now his last letter, written on October 15, 1963. He was discussing the outline of a study of human potential upon which we were jointly engaged. It is characteristic of him… "But being like the old man of Thermopylae who never does anything properly I can't lay my hands on the carbon of it." The letter ends, "I feel I shall never again be good for anything, but I hope and think this state of affiairs will pass in due course (it will pass—the only motto good for every human situation, good or bad)."

Aldous was keenly interested in the relationship between physique and temperament and was a close friend of Dr. William Sheldon, one of the notable pioneers in this field. Through him I got to know Sheldon, who told me that Aldous was one of the very few people who really understood what he was getting at. On one of our shopping expeditions in Ohrbach's, Los Angeles, Aldous introduced me to the art of escalator somatotyping. People on escalators are unselfconscious, unaware of scrutiny and at their ease. As we were wafted by them passing in the opposite direction, Aldous would call out, "Humphry, did you see that marvellously somatotonic woman with the Aztec features?" He himself illustrated the limitations imposed by constitution on even the liveliest imagination when he said, "You know, I can't imagine what it would be like to be Joe Louis." I had assumed that with his deep understanding of temperament he would have had little difficulty in entering the great

boxer's world. This is a world in which everything focuses upon those few highly ritualized and timeless moments in the ring; moments of truth for which a great boxer lives and during which he is truly alive. But to Aldous, lightly boned, poorly muscled, linear, slender and cerebrotonic, with his sensitivity to pain and awareness of the possibility of injury, that anyone could possibly enjoy watching or participating in this bone-smashing, brain-jarring combat, with its bruising impact of bodies, seemed incomprehensible.

Not long after my second visit to Los Angeles Maria died. Knowing that her time was short, she told me how worried she was about Aldous; but in the event he proved more resourceful and adaptable than she and most of his friends had expected.

He introduced me to many people to whom he thought our work would be interesting and from these introductions there have been many developments. For instance, that which he gave me to Mrs. Eileen Garrett[3] has resulted in a variety of studies relating parapsychology and psychopharmacology. And from this again there have been exciting new developments in hypnosis, a favourite subject of Aldous's. And with his brother Julian,[4] my colleague Professor Abram Hoffer and I have been exploring some of the genetic advantages of being schizophrenic. In our work with psychedelics (mind-manifesting or mind-revealing substances) Aldous advocated a cautious boldness, advising the explorers to do good stealthily, and to avoid publicity. Unfortunately his counsel was not always taken.

When we met in New York he usually dashed into a gallery, and flitted from picture to picture peering through his little spyglass, and always seeing things which I, with my much better sight, had never observed.

It was when he was writing *Island* that I learnt about the cancer that was to kill him. That was in November 1960, the day of the Presidential election, and I had flown up to see him in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was lecturing. He looked worn, tired, and pale. He told me that he had had a cancer of the tongue, but that his doctor thought it had a good chance of responding to treatment with radium needles. He had considered surgery, but learning that it would almost certainly interfere with his speech, had decided against it. He asked me not to discuss this with other members of his family because they would worry and it would not help him. He then dismissed the matter and read me the chapter from *Island* dealing with the Moksha medicine, the use of psychedelics for helping people prepare themselves to change in a changing world, teaching them how to learn to change for the better and how to prepare themselves for dying. It is packed with his finest ideas, which will repay much study and consideration, and which have still to be fully appreciated.

Early in 1961, he and Laura lost their new home in a furious brush fire, and all his possessions, including his books and papers, were burned. It was a sort of death, a stripping away of everything. As he said later, "I took it as a sign that the grim reaper was having a good look at me." Yet he weathered this too, and on his visits to England in 1961 and 1962, although lath-thin, so that you felt a gust of wind would blow him away, he was wonderfully lively.

Only a year before he died he stood outside the house where he was born in Charterhouse School in Surrey, and was touched and surprised that the present owner recognized him and invited him in. He found it hard to be a public figure and to take himself seriously as a great man. He told me it was uncomfortable being eulogized because he either felt like laughing or looking round to get a glimpse of the admirable person for whom the nice speeches were being made. He did, however, enjoy his reception in Rio de Janeiro, where every day of his stay one of the papers had a column headed O *Sabio—The Sage.* "It is the only place in the world where anyone wants to read a literary gent's opinion about things in general day after day." While he found Brasilia tiring and rather inhuman, the high point of this visit was his flight up the Amazon to see a tribe of stone age Indians. He was welcomed by one of the splendid anthropologist officers of the Indian Service, who hearing the name Huxley asked, "Sir Julian?" and on being told, "No, Aldous," burst into tears of joy. I think he esteemed no tribute higher than this one.

Last August in Stockholm at the World Academy, he was transparently pale and had been unsure whether he could come at all. The cancer had returned but had been beaten back again for the while. Yet he worked zealously to persuade members of the Academy to study human potential. Having succeeded, he set to and prepared an outline. I sat with him while he was completing this in his hotel room. He was engrossed in his task. Watching him I felt that I might never see him again, and so took some pictures of the master craftsman at work. For that deceptively easy conversational style was never accomplished without much careful revision. He told me that it was no easier to write now than it had been twenty-five years ago. He knew of no short-cuts to good writing except repeated rewriting. I was uneasy when we parted, but tried to ignore my misgivings. He was to visit me in Princeton during October, which was only two months away. And in our last few minutes together, we were discussing who should be invited to participate in the new work. But when October came he was too ill to travel. The borrowed time gained by x-ray treatment had run out and soon my dear friend, the wise and gentle triphibian, for that was his own definition of man, was no more.

Chapter 9

1953
Letters

The following group of letters written after Huxley's first mescalin experiment display his considerable enthusiasm ("without question the most extraordinary and significant experience this side of the Beatific Vision") and escalating interest in the areas of parapsychology, mental illness, visionary experience, and the politics of drug research. The long essay referred to is, of course, The Doors of Perception, *which he wrote during the summer months after first taking a long automobile journey across the western United States.*

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 631]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *California*
21 June, 1953

DEAR HUMPHRY,

Our trip ended only yesterday. Hence the long delay in acknowledging your letter. I will certainly talk to Hutchins about your project[1] when I have a good opportunity. Meanwhile I think it might be a good thing if you were to set forth in a couple of typewritten pages the nature of your project. Touch on the potential importance of mescalin studies from a purely medical point of view,[2] and then go on to their importance in the more generalized fields of psychology, philosophy, theory of knowledge. Point out that the available material is still ridiculously small, that greater numbers of cases are needed to determine how people of different physiques and temperaments react to the drug. E.g. do Galtonian visualizers react in a different way from non-visualizers. (I am sure they must. I am a non-visualizer, and got very little in the way of imagery. And yet visions are reported by many of those who have taken the stuff.) Again, is there any marked difference between the average reactions of extreme cerebro-tonics, viscerotonics and somatotonics? Do people with a pronounced musical gift get auditory counterparts of the visions and transfigurations of the external world experienced by others? How are pure mathematicians and professional philosophers affected? (It would be interesting to try

it out on a logical positivist. Would he, like Thomas Aquinas towards the end of his life, when he had been vouchsafed an experience of 'infused contemplation say that all his philosophy was as straw and chaff, and refuse to go on with his intellectualizing?) Armed with this summary of a project, and also with my own essay on the subject *[The Doors of Perception]* (which promises to turn into quite a long-drawn affair, owing to the number of questions it raises, and the different kinds of light it sheds, within so many fields), I will go to Hutchins and try to arouse his interest. I think it quite likely he might want to take the stuff himself; and as there are a number of people of diverse idiosyncrasies who have expressed, or will certainly express, a wish to try the experiment, might it not be possible to arrange for you or John Smythies to come here, later on, for a few days in order to conduct the investigation? Interested parties could put up travelling expenses, and accommodation could be found with us, or if it were necessary to go to Pasadena to try it on Ford Foundationeers or Caltech physicists, with Hutchins or someone else. If you think this idea feasible, let me know and I will start preparing the ground. Meanwhile let me have your summary. When my essay is done I will send it to you.

Maria joins me in sending all good wishes to yourself and the family.

Yours,
Aldous H.

TO HAROLD RAYMOND 3 [SMITH 632]

740 North Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
21 June, 1953

MY DEAR HAROLD,

We returned yesterday from a three weeks' tour through the Northwest to find your letter about Penguin. I am inclined to agree with you that this is a desirable move; so let us decide to go ahead with it.

The volume of essays on which I have been working sporadically for some time is getting on pretty well, and I hope to have the whole collection ready by the autumn. I am working at the moment on what promises to be a very long essay on an experience with mescalin, which I had this May, when an extremely able young English psychiatrist now working in Canada, with a group of equally enterprising young doctors and bio-chemists, on the problem of schizophrenia, came to stay with us. You have probably read accounts of the mescalin experience—by Havelock Ellis, for example, by Weir

Mitchell;[4] and there have been many others. It is without any question the most extraordinary and significant experience available to human beings this side of the Beatific Vision; and it opens up a host of philosophical problems, throws intense light and raises all manner of questions in the fields of aesthetics, religion, theory of knowledge. The most extraordinary fact about mescalin—the active principle in tbe peyotl cactus used by the North American Indians in their religious ceremonies, and now synthesized—is that it is almost completely non-toxic. No unpleasant physical results, except a faint seasickish feeling at the beginning, no lowering of intellectual capacity, and absolutely no hangover—just transformation of consciousness so that one knows exactly what Blake meant when he said, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear as it is, infinite and holy" The schizophrenic gets this kind of consciousness sometimes; but since he starts with fear and since the fact of not knowing when and how he is to emerge from this condition of changed consciousness tends to increase that fear, his commonest experiences are of an Other World, not heavenly but infernal and purgatorial. What these young men in Canada are on the track of is immensely important—a bio-chemical element in the causation of schizophrenia. Mescalin and the newly isolated drug, lysergic acid, which has the same effect, are very close, chemically speaking, to adrenalin. And one of the breakdown products of adrenalin, adrenochrome, which can occur within the body, can produce, when isolated, experiences closely akin to those produced by mescalin. So perhaps they may be getting close to a cure or preventative of this great modern plague. Who knows?

Our love to you both.

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 642]

740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, California
31 October, 1953

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… Thank you for the copy *of Macleans.* The article was most interesting.[5] Does lysergic acid always produce these terrifying results? Or did you give your guinea pig an extra large dose? Or, alternatively, did he start with a mild neurosis which was exaggerated out of all recognition? Whatever the answer, the inexplicable fact remains the nature of the visions. Who invents these astounding things? And why should the not-I who does the inventing hit on

precisely this kind of thing? The jewels and architectures seem to be almost specific—a regular symptom of the mescalin experience. Does this, I wonder, have anything to do with the phantasies of the Arabian Nights and other fairy stories? The jewelled palaces are partly, no doubt, wish fulfilments—the opposite of everyday experience. But they may also be actual *choses vues*—items in the ordinary landscape of certain kinds of people. It would be interesting to know whether something of the kind would be seen by children who know nothing about jewels, or by primitives, to whom diamonds, rubies etc. mean nothing… .

Yours,
Aldous

Chapter 10

1954
The Doors of Perception
ALDOUS HUXLEY

The publication of this slim volume, in the midst of the psychic and intellectual wasteland of the Eisenhower Administration and the McCarthy hearings, had a profound cultural impact Huxley's fortieth book—its title taken from "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" *by the visionary poet William Blake—is one of the key works of psychedelic literature. At the beginning of the final decade of his life, just a few months short of his sixtieth birthday, Huxley found the "key to chemical access."*

As a literary treatment of a scientific experiment, the references are typically wide-ranging; the tone, one of utmost reasonableness backed by personal testimony and historical evidence. In addition to Blake, an important literary source is The Tibetan Book of the Dead, *which was to figure so significantly in his later life and writings. Huxley concluded that, although it was superior to most drugs taken by mankind, "mescalin is not yet the ideal drug." But the concept of Moksha was much closer after his first mescalin experiment. Present at Huxley's psychedelic initiation, besides Dr. Osmond who acted as medical supervisor, was Aldous' wife Maria, to whom he dedicated* The Doors of Perception.

IT WAS IN 1886 that the German pharmacologist, Louis Lewin,[1] published the first systematic study of the cactus, to which his own name was subsequently given. *Anhalonium lewinii* was new to science. To primitive religion and the Indians of Mexico and the American Southwest it was a friend of immemorially long standing. Indeed, it was much more than a friend. In the words of one of the early Spanish visitors to the New World, "they eat a root which they call peyote, and which they venerate as though it were a deity."

Why they should have venerated it as a deity became apparent when such eminent psychologists as Jaensch,[2] Havelock Ellis,[3] and Weir Mitchell[4] began their experiments with mescalin, the active principle of peyote. True, they stopped short at a point well this side of idolatry; but all concurred in assigning to mescalin a position among drugs of unique distinction. Administered in suitable doses, it

changes the quality of consciousness more profoundly and yet is less toxic than any other substance in the pharmacologist's repertory.

Mescalin research has been going on sporadically ever since the days of Lewin and Havelock Ellis. Chemists have not merely isolated the alkaloid; they have learned how to synthesize it, so that the supply no longer depends on the sparse and intermittent crop of a desert cactus. Alienists have dosed themselves with mescalin in the hope thereby of coming to a better, a first-hand, understanding of their patients' mental processes. Working unfortunately upon too few subjects within too narrow a range of circumstances, psychologists have observed and catalogued some of the drug's more striking effects. Neurologists and physiologists have found out something about the mechanism of its action upon the central nervous system. And at least one professional philosopher has taken mescalin for the light it may throw on such ancient, unsolved riddles as the place of mind in nature and the relationship between brain and consciousness.

There matters rested until, two or three years ago, a new and perhaps highly significant fact was observed. Actually the fact had been staring everyone in the face for several decades; but nobody, as it happened, had noticed it until a young English psychiatrist, at present working in Canada, was struck by the close similarity, in chemical composition, between mescalin and adrenalin. Further research revealed that lysergic acid, an extremely potent hallucinogen derived from ergot, has a structural biochemical relationship to the others. Then came the discovery that adrenochrome, which is a product of the decomposition of adrenalin, can produce many of the symptoms observed in mescalin intoxication. But adrenochrome probably occurs spontaneously in the human body. In other words, each one of us may be capable of manufacturing a chemical, minute doses of which are known to cause profound changes in consciousness. Certain of these changes are similar to those which occur in that most characteristic plague of the twentieth century, schizophrenia. Is the mental disorder due to a chemical disorder? And is the chemical disorder due, in turn, to psychological distresses affecting the adrenals? It would be rash and premature to affirm it. The most we can say is that some kind of a *prima facie* case has been made out. Meanwhile the clue is being systematically followed, the sleuths—biochemists, psychiatrists, psychologists—are on the trail.

By a series of, for me, extremely fortunate circumstances I found myself, in the spring of 1953, squarely athwart that trail. One of the sleuths had come on business to California. In spite of seventy years of mescalin research, the psychological material at his disposal was still absurdly inadequate, and he was anxious to add to it. I was on the spot and willing, indeed eager, to be a guinea pig. Thus it came about

that, one bright May morning,[5] I swallowed four-tenths of a gram of mescalin dissolved in half a glass of water and sat down to wait for the results… .

• • •

… Confronted by a chair which looked like the Last Judgment—or, to be more accurate, by a Last Judgment which, after a long time and with considerable difficulty, I recognized as a chair—I found myself all at once on the brink of panic. This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. Too far, even though the going was into intenser beauty, deeper significance. The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the *Mysterium tremendum.* In theological language, this fear is due to the incompatibility between man's egoism and the divine purity, between man's self-aggravated separateness and the infinity of God. Following Boehme and William Law, we may say that, by unregenerate souls, the divine Light at its full blaze can be apprehended only as a burning purgatorial fire. An almost identical doctrine is to be found in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* where the departed soul is described as shrinking in agony from the Pure Light of the Void, and even from the lesser tempered Lights, in order to rush headlong into the comforting darkness of selfhood as a reborn human being, or even as a beast, an unhappy ghost, a denizen of hell. Anything rather than the burning brightness of unmitigated Reality—anything!

The schizophrenic is a soul not merely unregenerate, but desperately sick into the bargain. His sickness consists in the inability to take refuge from inner and outer reality (as the sane person habitually does) in the homemade universe of common sense—the strictly human world of useful notions, shared symbols and socially acceptable conventions. The schizophrenic is like a man permanently under the influence of mescalin, and therefore unable to shut off the experience of a reality which he is not holy enough to live with, which he cannot explain away because it is the most stubborn of primary facts, and which, because it never permits him to look at the world with merely human eyes, scares him into interpreting its unremitting strangeness, its burning intensity of significance, as the manifestations of human or even cosmic malevolence, calling for the most desperate

countermeasures, from murderous violence at one end of the scale to catatonia, or psychological suicide, at the other. And once enbarked upon the downward, the infernal road, one would never be able to stop. That, now, was only too obvious.

"If you started in the wrong way," I said in answer to the investigator's questions, "everything that happened would be a proof of the conspiracy against you. It would all be self-validating. You couldn't draw a breath without knowing it was part of the plot"

"So you think you know where madness lies?"

My answer was a convinced and heartfelt, "Yes."

"And you couldn't control it?"

"No I couldn't control it. If one began with fear and hate as the major premise, one would have to go on to the conclusion."

"Would you be able," my wife asked, "to fix your attention on what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* calls the Clear Light?"

I was doubtful.

"Would it keep the evil away, if you could hold it? Or would you not be able to hold it?"

I considered the question for some time. "Perhaps," I answered at last, "perhaps I could—but only if there were somebody there to tell me about the Clear Light. One couldn't do it by oneself. That's the point, I suppose of the Tibetan ritual—someone sitting there all the time and telling you what's what."

After listening to the record of this part of the experiment, I took down my copy of Evans-Wentz's edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* and opened at random. 'O nobly born, let not thy mind be distracted." That was the problem—to remain undistracted. Undistracted by the memory of past sins, by imagined pleasure, by the bitter aftertaste of old wrongs and humiliations, by all the fears and hate and cravings that ordinarily eclipse the Light. What those Buddhist monks did for the dying and the dead, might not the modern psychiatrist do for the insane? Let there be a voice to assure them, by day and even while they are asleep, that in spite of all the terror, all the bewilderment and confusion, the ultimate Reality remains unshakably itself and is of the same substance as the inner light of even the most cruelly tormented mind. By means of such devices as recorders, clock-controlled switches, public address systems and pillow speakers it should be very easy to keep the inmates of even an understaffed institution constantly reminded of this primordial fact. Perhaps a few of the lost souls might in this way be helped to win some measure of control over the universe—at once beautiful and appalling, but always other than human, always totally incomprehensible—in which they find themselves condemned to live.

None too soon, I was steered away from the disquieting splendors of

my garden chair. Drooping in green parabolas from the hedge, the ivy fronds shone with a kind of glassy, jade-like radiance. A moment later a clump of Red Hot Pokers, in full bloom, had exploded into my field of vision. So passionately alive that they seemed to be standing on the very brink of utterance, the flowers strained upwards into the blue. Like the chair under the laths, they protected too much. I looked down at the leaves and discovered a cavernous intricacy of the most delicate green lights and shadows, pulsing with undecipherable mystery.

Roses:
The flowers are easy to paint,
The leaves difficult.

Shiki's *haiku* (which I quote in R. H. Blyth's translation) expresses, by indirection, exactly what I then felt—the excessive, the too obvious glory of the flowers, as contrasted with the subtler miracle of their foliage.

We walked out into the street. A large pale blue automobile was standing at the curb. At the sight of it, I was suddenly overcome by enormous merriment. What complacency, what an absurd self-satisfaction beamed from those bulging surfaces of glossiest enamel! Man had created the thing in his own image—or rather in the image of his favorite character in fiction. I laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks.

We re-entered the house. A meal had been prepared. Somebody, who was not jet identical with myself, fell to with ravenous appetite. From a considerable distance and without much interest, I looked on.

When the meal had been eaten, we got into the car and went for a drive. The effects of the mescalin were already on the decline: but the flowers in the gardens still trembled on the brink of being supernatural, the pepper trees and carobs along the side streets still manifestly belonged to some sacred grove. Eden alternated with Dodona. Yggdrasil with the mystic Rose. And then, abruptly, we were at an intersection, waiting to cross Sunset Boulevard. Before us the cars were rolling by in a steady stream—thousands of them, all bright and shiny like an advertiser's dream and each more ludicrous than the last. Once again I was convulsed with laughter.

The Red Sea of traffic parted at last, and we crossed into another oasis of trees and lawns and roses. In a few minutes we had climbed to a vantage point in the hills, and there was the city spread out beneath us. Rather disappointingly, it looked very like the city I had seen on other occasions. So far as I was concerned, transfiguration was proportional to distance. The nearer, the more divinely other. This

vast, dim panorama was hardly different from itself.

We drove on, and so long as we remained in the hills, with view succeeding distant view, significance was at its everyday level, well below transfiguration point. The magic began to work again only when we turned down into a new suburb and were gliding between two rows of houses. Here, in spite of the peculiar hideousness of the architecture, there were renewals of transcendental otherness, hints of the morning's heaven. Brick chimneys and green composition roofs glowed in the sunshine, like fragments of the New Jerusalem. And all at once I saw what Guardi had seen and (with what incomparable skill) had so often rendered in his paintings—a stucco wall with a shadow slanting across it, blank but unforgettably beautiful, empty but charged with all the meaning and the mystery of existence. The revelation dawned and was gone again within a fraction of a second. The car had moved on; time was uncovering another manifestation of the eternal Suchness. "Within sameness there is difference. But that difference should be different from sameness is in no wise the intention of all the Buddhas. Their intention is both totality and differentiation." This bank of red and white geraniums, for example—it was entirely different from that stucco wall a hundred yards up the road. But the "is-ness" of both was the same, the eternal quality of their transience was the same.

An hour later, with ten more miles and the visit to the World's Biggest Drug Store safely behind us, we were back at home, and I had returned to that reassuring but profoundly unsatisfactory state known as "being in one's right mind."

Chapter 11

1954
Letters

The Doors of Perception *proved to be Huxley's most controversial work. The public response, writes his biographer Sybille Bedford, "was anything from excitement, discriminate and indiscriminate, to moral and intellectual disapproval, shrugging-off, embarrassment. . . . Self-respecting rationalists saw fresh evidence of quackery and intellectual abdication while the serious and religious were bothered by the offer of a shortcut" (Bedford, p. 544). But Aldous, energized from his experience, was already thinking about a sequel to* Doors, *and plunging into travel, correspondence, and diverse areas of study—some new and some revisited: parapsychology, sensory deprivation (then called "restrictive environment") and asceticism, schizophrenia and alcoholism, the heaven-and-hell metaphors and images from literature and art. He and Maria also tried a psychoactive drug little used in the U.S.:* ololiuqui *(morning glory seeds containing amides of lysergic acid), but the dose (six seeds) was apparently too low to provide any effects for Aldous beyond euphoria and relaxation.*

A long trip to Europe and the Middle East included a lecture on visionary experience at an international parapsychology congress. He spoke on the same subject to students at Duke University on his return to the U.S. By the end of the year he was busily working up his notes on this subject into a book.

TO J. B. RHINE 1 [SMITH 649]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *California*
17 January, 1954

DEAR DR. RHINE,

… I am sending you a set of the page proofs of a forthcoming essay on the mescalin experience [*The Doors of Perception*], The subject of what may be called the fauna and flora of the deeper subconscious is one that fascinates me. For it would seem that, beyond the personal subconscious (concerned with the problems of our private history) and beyond Jung's collective subconscious, with its Archetypes which are

symbolic of the immemorial problems of the species, lies a world which has little or nothing to do with our personal or collective human interests—the world from which poets and prophets have derived their descriptions of hell and heaven and the other, remoter areas of the Other World. What turns up under mescalin and in schizophrenia is diverse; but the diversity exhibits many common features, and these common features crop up in descriptions of Christian, Moslem and Buddhist paradises and, when the experience has taken a negative turn, in descriptions of hell. There are many items in Dante which are very close to what schizophrenics and mescalin takers experience and describe. Why we should carry about with us this vast non-human universe, one simply cannot imagine. It is just "one of those things"—like marsupials in Australia, like giraffes in Africa, only of course much much odder. For at least marsupials and giraffes are adapted to conditions on our planet; whereas these heaven and hell phenomena of the deep subconscious seem to be completely irrelevant to our private experience or to the experience of the race… .

Yours very sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 653]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *California*
2 March, 1954

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… Three interesting things have turned up recently. My old friend Naomi Mitchison writes from Scotland, after reading the *Doors,* that she had an almost identical experience of the transfiguration of the outer world during her various pregnancies. Could this be due to a temporary upset in the sugar supply to the brain? (Also, a strange woman writes that she has had a mescalin-like experience during attacks of hypoglycaemia.)

A stranger writes from Seattle that he had produced extraordinary changes of consciousness-which he doesn't describe—by fasting and going without sleep over a weekend. This, of course, is what so many mystics, East and West, have done. Asceticism is only partially motivated by a sense of sin and a desire for expiation, and only partly, on the subconscious level, by masochism. It is also motivated by the desire to get in touch with the Other World, and the knowledge, personal or vicarious, that "mortification" leads through the door in the wall.

Another stranger writes from Los Angeles. He is an ex-alcoholic, who had ecstatic experiences in his early days of alcoholism and insists, in spite of what the Freudians may say, that the longing for ecstasy is a very strong motive in many alcoholics. He is also a friend of Indians, knows some who have taken peyote but had a terrifying experience, and hints at knowing or being able to find out a good deal about the relationship between peyotism and alcoholism among Indians. I haven't seen this man, and doubt if we shall have time to do so before our departure. But (I hope you don't mind!) I have asked him to put down his information on paper and to send it to you. I think it might be of considerable value. He suggests that it might be very interesting to try the effect of mescalin on alcoholics, past and present. And I think that, if your research project gets started (or even if it doesn't), this might be a fruitful thing to do.[2]

I also have an amiable, able […] friend [A. L. Kitselman], who has evolved, out of the texts of Early Buddhism (texts which he can study in the original Pali) a form of psycho-therapy which he calls E Therapy. (E being equivalent to the Entelechy, the Bodhi.) He himself has taken peyote and proposes to launch out into mescalin, under doctor's supervision. Meanwhile he has made a few experiments with ololiuqu[i], has found that in some cases it seems to increase suggestibility, to give release from long-standing tensions, and to help the taker to obtain insights into his or her true nature. At the same time it seems to make it easier for those who are near the taker to enter into some kind of telepathic rapport with him—or should one say a sub-telegraphic rapport, inasmuch as the experiences shared are not thoughts but pains and discomforts, which the assistants feel vicariously (as has happened under deep hypnosis) and which in some way they 'discharge/ to the benefit of the taker, who feels much better afterwards. Oloiuqu[i] is used by the Mexican and Cuban witch doctors to increase ESP faculties and relieve disease; so it may be that there is something psychologically objective about all this. When we took it nothing much happened to Leslie LeCron [3] and myself, except euphoria and relaxation. Maria got some very amusing and coherent visions—different in quality from those she ordinarily gets under hypnosis, and more obviously meaningful in a symbolic way. One of them was like a supplementary chapter to *Monkey*—the wonderful Chinese allegory translated by Arthur Waley. It was a vision of Monkey trying to climb to heaven up his own tail—a really admirable comment on the pretensions of the discursive intellect.

Have you ever tried the effects of mescalin on a congenitally blind man or woman? This would surely be of interest.

Love from us both to you and the family.

Yours,

TO HAROLD RAYMOND [SMITH 657]

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740 N. Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
8 March, 1954

DEAR HAROLD,

Thank you for your letter and the good news about the sales of the book [*The Doors of Perception*]—excellent, I should say, for an essay. I saw Young's review—which I liked very much, and which pleased my friend Dr. Osmond, the psychiatrist under whose supervision I took the stuff. Osmond himself is writing a review of the book in *Tomorrow* and his young colleague, Dr. Smythies, is doing a piece, on mescalin in general, in the same magazine. Incidentally, I am amazed what a lot of work is being done on mescalin. Things keep cropping up—work at Boston, work at Chicago, work in Buenos Aires. In connection with the last, a very able Argentinian-Italian suddenly swam into my ken a day or two ago. It turns out that he is the greatest authority on the chemistry of the cactus alkaloids, including, of course, mescalin.[4]

What Steedman[5] said about the drug sometimes having terrifying results is, of course, perfectly true. (I mentioned the fact in the essay.) A very good account of the terror is given by a Canadian journalist called Katz in the (I think) October number of *Macleans Magazine* (a Canadian publication). He took the drug under Osmond's supervision, and his article is a blow by blow account, based on recordings and shorthand notes, of his experiences—which were perfectly appalling. How odd it is that writers like Belloc and Chesterton may sing the praises of alcohol (which is responsible for about two thirds of the car accidents and three quarters of the crimes of violence) and be regarded as good Christians and noble fellows, whereas anyone who ventures to suggest that there may be other and less harmful short cuts to self-transcendence is treated as a dangerous drug fiend and wicked perverter of weak-minded humanity! …

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 671]

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740 N. Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
25 October, [1954]

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

Just received your letter announcing your arrival around the fifteenth

to seventeenth of November. I hope you will stay here as long as you can. If you feel the need of greater quiet, we could go out into the desert somewhere for a few days, or on to the coast, or maybe for a little trip combining both, which is very feasible in these parts.

We gave most of our mescalin to our friend Dr. Godel in Egypt, who knew a little about the subject but wanted to find out more. This being so, please come supplied; for you know how hard it is to get hold of anything here. I can't remember if I told you about Dr. Puharich's use of lysergic acid in ESP experiments—finding that there was a period of heightened ability near the beginning, a long spell of no ability, and then another lucid period near the end. He was going to try to cut down the dose in such a way as to keep the subject in the lucid zone all the time, without being carried out of bounds into the totally Other World.[6] Obviously we have to think of the mind in terms of a stratified Neapolitan ice, with a peculiar flavour of consciousness at each level. Pharmacology may permit us to go precisely to the level we want and no further.

Did you, by the way, ever send the plays?

Our love to you all.

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 672]

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740 N. Kings Rd.,
L A *46, Cal.*
7 November, 1954

DEAR HUMPHRY,

Can you please give me a little information. Where is [D. O.] Hebb's work on the effects of restricted environment published? Or, better still can you tell me in a line or two what was the nature of the experiences induced by being shut up in silence, in the dark? Were these visions of a mescalin-like kind? I want at least to mention the work in the essay on "Visionary Experience, Vis. Art and the Other World," which I am now enlarging.[7]

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Yours,
Aldous

Chapter 12

1954
The Far Continents Of The Mind

ALDOUS HUXLEY

The following address is the first of Huxley's many talks on the attainment of visionary experience. Eileen J. Garrett, a longtime friend, was president of the Parapsychology Foundation which hosted annual symposia attracting the leading figures in the field. Huxley's interest in parapsychology goes back to the 1930s, *when he visited Dr J* B. *Rhine at Duke University in 1937.*

IT IS DIFFICULT to speak of mental events except in similes drawn from the familiar universe of material things. A man may be said to consist of an Old World of personal consciousness, and, on the other side of a dividing ocean, of a series of New Worlds. These New Worlds of a subconscious can never be colonized, are seldom thoroughly explored, and in many cases await even discovery. As in this earth, if you go to the antipodes of the. self-conscious personality, you will encounter all sorts of creatures at least as odd as kangaroos. We do not, in either case, invent these creatures. They live independently, and beyond our control. But we may go where they are, and observe them. They exist "out there" in the mental equivalent of distant space. From "in here" we can sometimes watch them as they go about their mysterious business.

Some never consciously discover their antipodes. Others make an occasional landing. A few others come and go easily at will. For the naturalist of the mind—who must gather his data before we become true zoologists of the mind—the primary need is for some safe, easy, reliable method of transportation between the two Worlds. Two such methods exist. Neither is perfect; both are sufficiently reliable, easy and safe to justify their use by those who know what they do. The first is by use of mescalin, an alkaloid chemical. The second is by means of hypnotism. The two vessels carry consciousness to the same region; the drug has longer range and carries one farther into the *terra incognita.*

As to hypnosis, we do not know how it produces its observed effects. Nor need we know. About the physiological effects of mescalin we know a little. It interferes with the enzyme system regulating

cerebral functioning, impairs the brain's efficiency and permits entry into consciousness of certain kinds of mental activity normally excluded as possessing no survival value. We have visions. But they are not random visions. What takes place in them follows patterns as logical internally as are the things seen in the antipodes of the external world. They are strange, but with a certain regularity.

Certain common features are imposed by this pattern upon our visionary experience. First, and most important, is the experience of light. Everything is brilliantly illuminated, shining from within, and a riot of colors is intensified to a pitch unknown in the normal state. (Most normal dreams are either in black and white or only faintly colored.) Color in dream or vision probably represents sight of "something given" as distinguished from the dramatic symbols of our own struggles or wishes, which are usually uncolored. The visions seen in these antipodes of the mind have nothing to do with the dreams of normal sleep, which we ourselves generate. We see them because they are there, but they are not our creations. Such preternatural light is characteristic of all visionary experience.

Along with light, there comes recognition of heightened significance, The self-luminous objects possess a meaning as intense as their color. Here, significance is identical with being: objects do not stand for anything but themselves. Their meaning is precisely this: that they are intensely themselves, and, being so, are manifestations of the essential givenness and otherness of the universe.

Light, color and significance do not exist in isolation. They modify, or are manifested by, objects. Certain classes of perceptual images appear again and again; colored, moving, living geometrical forms which undulate into more concrete perceptions of patterned things, such as carpets, carvings, mosaics, transmuting continually into other forms in heightened color and grandeur. The observer is cut off from his past; he views a new creation. Much in them is similar to the heavens and fairylands of folklore and religion, the prototype of many Paradises.

But there may be infernal experience as well, as terrible as the other is glorious. In paradisal visions there is a sense of dissociation from self and its body; in infernal visions the consciousness of the body is heightened and continually degraded. This comes when one lacks that faith and loving confidence which alone guarantees that visionary experience shall be blissful. And what takes place in visions may be but a foretaste of what shall come after the moment of death.

Chapter 13

1955
Mescaline And The "Other World"

ALDOUS HUXLEY

At the first American symposium on psychedelic substances Huxley was the only non-medical person amongst "the Electric Shock Boys, the Chlorpromaziners, and the 57 *Varieties of Psychotherapists" (as he wrote to Humphry Osmond). His address, not unexpectedly, was the only one that dealt with the drug experience of the "relatively sane," rather than the mentally disturbed person. Ideas which he was to further develop in* Heaven and Hell*—the value of access to "the antipodes of the mind," visionary experience by means of hypnosis, hallucinogens, the "transport" of objects such as precious stones, the magical qualities governing these states—is developed primarily through literary and artistic references.*

MY PURPOSE TONIGHT IS To discuss the mescaline experiences, not of neurotics, but of those who, like myself, are relatively sane. Classic descriptions of this experience were given, many years ago, by Weir Mitchell and Havelock Ellis, whose accounts tally very closely with what I myself and all the experimenters with whom I am personally acquainted were able to report. These classic mescaline experiences differ in many respects from those we have heard discussed tonight. Almost all of those we have heard discussed tonight are colored by fear and anxiety. Moreover, they abound in references to the subject's personal memories and to the traumatic experiences of his childhood. How different is the classic mescaline experience! Here the most striking feature, stressed emphatically by all who have gone through it, is its profound impersonality. The classic mescaline experience is not of consciously or unconsciously remembered events, does not concern itself with early traumas, and is not, in most cases, tinged by anxiety and fear. It is as though those who were going through it had been transported by mescaline to some remote, non-personal region of the mind.

Let us use a geographical metaphor and liken the personal life of the ego to the Old World. We leave the Old World, cross a dividing ocean, and find ourselves in the world of the personal subconscious, with its flora and fauna of repressions, conflicts, traumatic memories and the

like. Traveling further, we reach a kind of Far West, inhabited by Jungian archetypes and the raw materials of human mythology. Beyond this region lies a broad Pacific. Wafted across it on the wings of mescaline or lysergic acid diethylamide, we reach what may be called the Antipodes of the mind. In this psychological equivalent of Australia we discover the equivalents of kangaroos, wallabies, and duck-billed platypuses—a whole host of extremely improbable animals, which nevertheless exist and can be observed.

Now, the problem is, how can we visit the remote areas of the mind, where these creatures live? Some people, it is clear, can go there spontaneously and more or less at will. A few of these travelers were great artists, who could not only visit the Antipodes, but could also give an account of what they saw, in words, or in pictures. Much more numerous are those who have been to the Antipodes, have seen its strange inhabitants, but are incapable of giving adequate expression to what they have observed. At the present time they are reluctant to give even an inadequate expression to their experience. The mental climate of our age is not favorable to visionaries. Those who have such spontaneous experiences, and are unwise enough to talk about them, are looked on with suspicion and told that they ought to see a psychiatrist. In the past, experiences of this kind were considered valuable and those who had them were looked up to. This is one of the reasons (though not perhaps the only reason) why there were more visionaries in earlier centuries than there are today.

Those who cannot visit the mind's Antipodes at will (and they are the majority) must find some artificial method of transportation. One method which works in a certain proportion of cases is hypnosis. There are persons who, under moderately deep hypnosis, enter the visionary state.

More certain in their effect are the so-called hallucinogens, mescaline and LSD. Personally I have never taken LSD, so I can speak, from experience, only of mescaline. Mescaline transports us very painlessly—for there is hardly any of that horrible nausea which follows the ingestion of the peyote cactus, and there is no hangover—to the mind's Antipodes, where we find a fauna and a flora strikingly different from the fauna and flora of the familiar Old World of personal consciousness. But just as marsupials, though improbable, are in no sense random or lawless phenomena, so it is with the inhabitants of the mind's Antipodes. They conform to the laws of their own being, they can be classified and their strangeness possesses a certain regularity of pattern. As [Heinrich] Klüver has pointed out in his book on peyote,[1] visionary experiences, though varying from individual to individual, belong nevertheless to one and the same family. Mescaline experiences of the classic kind exhibit certain well-

marked characteristics.

The most striking of these common characteristics is the experience of light. There is a great intensification of light; this intensification is experienced both when the eyes are closed and when they are open. Light seems praeternaturally intense in all that is seen with the inward eye. It seems also praeternaturally strong in the outside world.

With this intensification of light there goes a tremendous intensification of color, and this holds good of the outer world as well as of the inner world.

Finally there is an intensification of what I may call intrinsic significance. That which is seen, either with the eyes closed or open, is felt to have a profound meaning. A symbol stands for something else, and this standing for something else is its meaning. But the meaningful things seen in the mescaline experience are not symbols. They do not stand for something else, do not mean anything except themselves. The significance of each thing is identical with its being. Its point is that it *is*. In a paradoxical, but (to those who have experienced this heightening of intrinsic significance) an entirely self-evident way, the relative becomes absolute, the transient particularly universal and eternal.

Intensified light, intensified color and intensified significance do not exist in isolation. They inhere in objects. And here again the experiences of those who have taken a hallucinogen, while in a good state of mental and physical health, and with a proper degree of philosophical preparation, seem to follow a fairly regular pattern. When the eyes are closed, visionary experience begins with the appearance in the visual field of living, moving geometries. These abstract, three-dimensional forms are intensely illuminated and brilliantly colored. After a time they tend to take on the appearance of concrete objects, such as richly patterned carpets, or mosaics, or carvings. These in turn modulate into rich and elaborate buildings, set in landscapes of extraordinary beauty. Neither the buildings nor the landscapes remain static, but change continuously. In none of their metamorphoses do they resemble any particular building or landscape seen by the subject in his ordinary state and remembered from the near or distant past. These things are all new. The subject does not remember or invent them; he discovers them, “out there,” in the psychological equivalent of a hitherto unexplored geographical region.

Through these landscapes and among these living architectures wander strange figures, sometimes of human beings (or even of what seem to be superhuman beings), sometimes of animals or fabulous monsters. Giving a straightforward prose description of what he used to see in his spontaneous visions, Willim Blake reports that he frequently saw beings, to whom he gave the name of Cherubim. These

beings were a hundred and twenty feet high and were engaged (this is characteristic of the personages seen in vision) in doing nothing that could be thought of as being symbolic or dramatic. In this respect the inhabitants of the mind's Antipodes differ from the figures inhabiting Jung's archetypal world; for they have nothing to do either with the personal history of the visionary, or even with the age-old problems of the human race. Quite literally, they are the inhabitants of "the Other World."

This brings me to a very interesting and, I believe, significant point. The visionary experience, whether spontaneous or induced by drugs, hypnosis or any other means, bears a striking resemblance to "the Other World," as we find it described in the various traditions of religion and folklore. In every culture the abode of the gods and of souls in bliss is a country of surpassing beauty, glowing with color, bathed in intense light. In this country are seen buildings of indescribable magnificence, and its inhabitants are fabulous creatures, like the six-winged seraphs of Hebrew tradition, or like the winged bulls, the hawk-headed men, the human-headed lions, the many-armed, or elephant-headed personages of Egyptian, Babylonian and Indian mythology. Among these fabulous creatures move superhuman angels and spirits, who never do anything, but merely enjoy the beatific vision.

The costumes of the inhabitants, the buildings and even many features of the landscape in "the Other World" are encrusted with precious stones. Interestingly enough, the same is true of the inner world contacted under mescaline or in spontaneous vision. Weir Mitchell and many of the other experimenters, who have left an account of their mescaline experience, record a profusion of living gems. These gems which, in Mitchell's words, look like clusters of transparent fruit, glowing with internal radiance, encrust the buildings, the mountains, the banks of rivers, the trees. One is reminded, as one reads these descriptions of the mescaline experience, of what is said of the next world in the various religious literatures of the world. Ezekiel speaks of "the stones of fire," which are found in Eden. In the Book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem is a city of precious stones and of a substance which must have seemed to our ancestors almost as wonderful as gem-stones—glass. The wall of the New Jerusalem is of "gold like glass"—that is to say of a transparent, self-luminous substance having the color of gold. Glass reappears in the Celtic and Teutonic mythologies of Western Europe. The home of the dead, among the Teutons, is a glass mountain, and among the Celts it was a glass island, with glass bowers.

The Hindu and Buddhist paradises abound, like the New Jerusalem, in gems; and the same is true of the magic island which, in Japanese

mythology, parallels Avalon and the Isles of the Blest.

Among primitive peoples, ignorant of glass and having no access to gemstones, paradise is adorned with self-luminous flowers. Such magical flowers play an important part in the Other World of more advanced peoples. One thinks, for example, of the lotus of Buddhist and Hindu mythology, the rose and lily of the Christian tradition.

It may be objected that paradise is merely "pie in the sky," and that the reason all paradises are adorned with precious stones is precisely their preciousness here on earth. But why should gems ever have been regarded as precious? What has induced men to spend such enormous quantities of time, trouble and money on the finding and cutting of colored pebbles? In terms of any kind of utilitarian philosophy, the fact is entirely inexplicable. My own view is that an explanation for the preciousness of precious stones must be sought, first of all, in the facts of visionary experience. Gem-like objects, bright, self-luminous, glowing with praeternatural color and significance, exist in the mind's Antipodes, are seen by visionaries and are felt by all who see them to be of enormous significance. In the objective world, the things which most nearly resemble these self-luminous visionary objects are gems. Precious stones are held to be precious, because they remind human beings of the Other World at the mind's Antipodes—the Other World of which visionaries are fully conscious, and ordinary persons are obscurely and, as it were, subterraneously aware. There is a magical kind of beauty, which we say is "transporting." The adjective is well chosen; for it is literally true that certain spectacles do carry away the mind of the beholder—carry it out of the everyday world of common, conceptualized experience into the magical Other World of nonverbal, visionary awareness.

Flowers are almost as transporting as precious stones, and I would be inclined to attribute the almost universal passion for flowers, the almost universal use of flowers in the rites of religion, to the fact that they remind men and women of what is always there, praeternaturally bright, colorful and significant, at the back of their minds.

Of the connection between visionary experience and certain forms of art, I have not time to speak. Suffice it to say that the connection is real, and that the almost magical power exercised by certain works of art springs from the fact that they remind us, consciously or, more often, unconsciously, of that Other World, which the natural visionary can enter at will, and to which the rest of us have access only under the influence of hypnosis or of a drug such as mescaline or LSD.

Chapter 14

1955
Letters

Aldous took mescalin twice this year. The first occasion was in the company of his longtime friend, the British writer, Gerald Heard, and uranium-mogul Captain Albert M. Hubbard. "Since I was in a group," wrote Huxley, "the experience had a human content, which the earlier, solitary experience, with its Other Worldly quality and its intensification of aesthetic experience, did not possess" The second mescalin session guided by Laura Archera was overwhelmingly spiritual, bringing "the direct, total awareness … of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact." Between these sessions occurred the death of his beloved Maria, whom he had married in 1919. *Maria had taken mescalin and* ololiuqui, *had had visionary experiences under hypnosis, and mystical revelations in the desert. She and Aldous had attended D. H. Lawrence at his death in* 1930. *During Maria's last hours Aldous read the Bardo Thodol to her from* The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Most of the essay Heaven and Hell *was written during* 1955. *The year ended with Huxley's first LSD experiment, again in the company of Heard and Hubbard. Aldous took a small dose, but the experience was highly significant: while listening to Bach, he comprehended "the essential All-Rightness of the universe … the reconciliation of opposites . . .the Nirvana-nature of Samsara." He also experimented with a psychoactive gas composed of carbon dioxide and oxygen (carbogen). Another facet of Huxley's character is revealed in his attempt to solicit support for someone arrested for possession of peyote.*

TO ROGER AND ALICE GODEL [SMITH 676]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
10 January, 1955

MY DEAR ROGER AND ALICE,

… I have done a great deal of work—having finished a short novel,[1] which is to come out next April or May, and a volume of essays,[2]

including the one on visionary experience and the Other World, which you saw last spring, and which has now been greatly enlarged so as to include a discussion of visionary art.

And, talking of visions, I took mescalin yesterday, for the second time. This experience was no less remarkable than the first—but entirely different; for since I was in a group, with three other people, the experience had a human content, which the earlier, solitary experience, with its Other Worldly quality and its intensification of aesthetic experience, did not possess. For five hours I was given a series of luminous illustrations of the Christian saying, "Judge not that ye be not judged," and the Buddhist saying, 'To set up what you like against what you dislike, this is the disease of the mind." Incidentally some remarkable developments are now taking place in the field of mescalin. A group of psychologists and social workers in Vancouver and Seattle have developed techniques for using mescalin therapeutically. It acts in the opposite way to narcosynthesis. When psychological treatment is done under barbiturates, the ego is made drowsy and it becomes possible to get at some of the contents of the personal subconscious. But with mescalin consciousness is not narrowed, it is enormously enlarged, and the whole gamut of the psyche, up to the highest superconscious levels, is opened up. The first treatment is negative in its nature, the second positive. And the results in the cases hitherto treated (they are still rather few) have been spectacular. Delinquent boys have been totally transformed in a single sitting, and the *metanoia* has persisted. Meanwhile a considerable number of academic persons and of professional and business men have taken the stuff—and all, without exception, have declared it to be the most significant experience of their lives and have found, particularly when it is taken in groups, that mescalin brings about a profound and lasting change of outlook. There is some prospect of a mixed commission—doctors, psychologists, philosophers, social workers—being created to consider the whole subject. As the man whose book was largely responsible for the great increase of interest in mescalin, I hope to participate in the work of this commission.

Have the dialogues yet appeared?[3] And what are you working on now? (as though your hospital work were not real work!) And how is Alice's family? And the Hellous?

I hope that 1955 will be a fruitful year for both of you and a very happy one.

Ever yours, dear Alice, and ever yours too, dear Roger,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 678]

740 North Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
12 January, 1955

DEAR HUMPHRY,

It was good to hear your voice[4] so clearly across the intervening spaces. Your nice Captain tried a new experiment—group mescalinization. It worked very well for Gerald Heard and myself, hardly at all for [——], who was given a small dose (200 mgs to our 300) and who had a subconscious resistance of tremendous power, and rather poorly for Hub-bard, who tried to run the group in the way he had run other groups in Vancouver, where the drug has worked as a device for raising buried guilts and traumas and permitting people to get on to better terms with themselves. Gerald and I evaded him and went somewhere else—but not to the remote Other Worlds of previous experiments. In both cases, albeit in different ways, it was a transcendental experience within *this* world and with human references. I hope to write something about my experience and will send you a copy in due course. Meanwhile I am hopeful that the good Captain, whose connections with Uranium seem to serve as a passport into the most exalted spheres of government, business and ecclesiastical polity, is about to take off for New York, where I hope he will storm the United Nations, take Nelson Rockefeller for a ride to Heaven and return with millions of dollars. What Babes in the Wood we literary gents and professional men are! The great World occasionally requires your services, is mildly amused by mine; but its full attention and deference are paid to Uranium and Big Business. So what extraordinary luck that this representative of both these Higher Powers should (a) have become so passionately interested in mescalin and (b) be such a very nice man.

I am enclosing a letter from France, which I mislaid and have just recovered from the depths of a coat pocket. I have asked this pharmacological lady to send you a copy of her thesis direct. It might be of some interest… .

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 679]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
16 January, 1955

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

Thank you for your letter and the script of the talk, which I like very much indeed. All I can suggest by way of change is an addition of a line or two, indicating a little more specifically than you do what may be expected from systematic research with mescalin and similar substances. One would expect, for example, that new light might be shed on the workings of artistic and scientific insight, and perhaps some control gained over the otherwise random and gratuitous process of inspiration. One would also expect light to be shed on the problems of parapsychology. Also on those of philosophy and religion.

Gerald and I had another day with Al Hubbard, down at Long Beach. He has provided us both with a stock of carbon dioxide and oxygen mixture.[5] I have tried this stuff before, without much effect. But I suspect it was not administered properly, and maybe there will, after all, be something to be learned by means of this simple and harmless procedure. Hubbard himself swears by it… .

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 713]

Newcomb House, Clapboard Hill Rd.,
Guilford, Conn.
26 July, 1955

DEAR HUMPHRY,

I am two long good letters in your debt. No excuse, except that I have been trying to catch up with vast arrears of correspondence and to finish the series of appendices which will be published with the essay on "Visionary Experience and Visionary Art," when it comes out next January.[6] The publisher's deadline is August the first; so I have to keep very busy. I have done one of the appendices on popular visionary art—e.g. fireworks, pageantry, theatrical spectacle, magic lantern shows (very important in the past) and certain aspects of the cinema. A curious and interesting subject. One of the striking facts is the close dependence of such arts on technology. For example, the progress in artificial lighting since 1750—spermaceti candles, Argand's burners for oil lamps, gaslight, limelight from 1825 onwards, parabolic reflectors from 1790, electric light after the 'eighties—has immensely heightened the magical power of pageantry and the theatrical spectacle. Elizabeth II's coronation was better than anything of the kind in the past, because of floodlights. It could also be preserved on film—whereas all previous pageants were ephemeral shows and could only hope "to live in Settle's numbers one day more." The producers of Jacobean masques were hopelessly handicapped by

having no decent lighting. Magic lanterns are very interesting. The fact that Kircher's invention was christened "magic" and that the name was universally accepted is highly significant. Intense light plus transparent colour equals vision. And did you realize that the word "phantasmagoria" was coined in 1802 by the inventors of a new and improved magic lantern which moved on wheels back and forth behind a semi-transparent screen and could project images of varying sizes, which were kept in focus by an automatic focusing device? I cannot help believing that many features in the Romantic imagination were derived from the magic lantern show with its "dissolving views" (produced by two lanterns with convergent images and shutters that could be stopped down and opened up in correspondence with one another), its "phantasmagorias," its "chrometropic slides" (producing three dimensional moving patterns, very like those of mescalin). One sees hints of the lantern show in Shelley and, in another aspect, in Keats, in Fuseli and John Martin. And, talking of lanterns—did I tell you that my friend Dr. [L. S.] Cholden[7] had found that the stroboscope improved on mescalin effects, just as Al Hubbard did? His own geometrical visions turned, under the flashing lamp, to Japanese landscapes. How the hell this fits in with the notion that stroboscopic effects result from the interference of two rhythms, the lamp's and the brain waves', I cannot imagine. And anyhow what on earth are the neurological correlations of mescalin and LSD experiences? And if neurological patterns are formed, as presumably they must be, can they be reactivated by a probing electrode, as [Wilder] Penfield reactivates trains of memories, evoking complete vivid recall?

I too have had a birthday, this very day.

> How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of age,
> Stol'n on his wing my first and sixtieth year!

Affectionately,
Aldous

TO MRS. EILEEN J. GARRETT [SMITH 717]

Guilford, Conn.
27 August, 1955

MY DEAR EILEEN,

… I spent some days, earlier this month, at Glen Cove, in the Strange household assembled by Puharich—Alice [Bouverie] and Mrs. P[uharich], behaving to one another in a conspicuously friendly way; Elinor Bond, doing telepathic guessing remarkably well, but not

producing anything of interest or value in the mediumistic sitting she gave me; Frances Farrelly, with her diagnostic machine—which Puharich's tests have shown to be merely an instrument, like a crystal ball, for concentrating ESP faculties; Harry, the Dutch sculptor, who goes into trances in the Faraday cages and produces automatic scripts in Egyptian hieroglyphics; Narodny, the cockroach man, who is preparing experiments to test the effects of human telepathy on insects. It was all very lively and amusing—and, I really think, promising; for whatever may be said against Puharich, he is certainly very intelligent, extremely well-read and highly enterprising. His aim is to reproduce by modern pharmacological, electronic and physical methods the conditions used by the shamans for getting into a state of travelling clairvoyance and then, if he succeeds, to send people to explore systematically "the Other World." This seems to be as good a new approach to the survival problem (along with a lot of other problems) as any of the rest, and may yield some interesting results. Meanwhile, to everyone's immense delight, they have found specimens of *Amanita muscaria* actually growing on the estate—having received instructions where to find them via the ouija board, while trying to contact Mr. [Gordon] Wasson's *curandera,* who was under mushroom trance at the moment, in Mexico. This is all the more remarkable as the literature of the mycological society of New England records only one previous instance of the discovery of an *Amanita* in Maine. At Glen Cove they have now found eight fine specimens on the same spot. The effects, when a piece as big as a pin's head, is rubbed for a few seconds into the skin of the scalp are quite alarmingly powerful, and it will obviously take a lot of very cautious experimentation to determine the right psienhancing dose of the mushroom.

I go to New York on Monday, shall stay with Anita Loos and talk with my director and producer about my play [*The Genius and the Goddess*], then fly to Los Angeles on Thursday. Ellen and Matthew send love.

Affectionately,
Aldous

Chapter 15

1955
Disregarded In The Darkness

LAURA HUXLEY

Aldous' mescalin experience in Oct. 1955 *can be evaluated both from the account of Laura Archera—his wife-to-be, and session guide—and his own account in a letter to Dr. Osmond, Laura's sensitive description is revelatory not only as an objective view of Aldous under the influence of a psychedelic, but for the light it throws on the function of a psychedelic guide or companion during a session. Huxley had intended to explore his childhood—Laura was experienced in eliciting recall and working off abreactions with dianetic procedures—but instead there occurred an examination of the nature of love in the relation of himself and his guide as "no separation between subject and object."*

The creative process whereby Huxley drew on his personal experiences in writing episodes of Island *is discussed in this report.* This Timeless Moment *also contains a description of Laura's initial psychedelic experience and Aldous' responses to her, including a statement she heard him repeat often in following years: "This drug seems to do for each person what the person needs"*

Now, In 1967, when LSD has become a household word, I realize how lucky those of us were who ten years ago approached LSD before it had either the demoniacal or the paradisiacal vibrations it has now—when it had no echoes of gurus and heroes, doctors or delinquents. We went into the experience not knowing what would happen, not expecting that it would be like the experience of someone at last Saturday night's party, or like that of Mary Jones, whose hallucinated, frightened eyes stare at me from the pages of a magazine. LSD—those three now-famous letters were free of association with scientific righteousness and beatnik conformity, with earthly paradise and parental loving concern—also free from closed-mindedness, obscurantism, and bigotry. The unconscious identification with those ideas, feelings, and fears inevitably occurs now, with disastrous consequences.

What was my own initiation to LSD? It was very simple: Aldous asked me to keep him company one whole day when he was going to

take LSD.[1]

"I would love to stay with you all day," I answered. "Is there anything I should know or do?"

Aldous smiled. "Nothing—just be as you are."

Was it naïveté rather than wisdom that made me pass over that statement so lightly?

I arrived at Aldous's home about nine o'clock. Aldous took the pills and gave me a paper on which he had written his main purpose for this session. I cannot quote his words exactly—however, their essence was this: "I want to know, and constantly be, in the state of love."

I wondered. To me Aldous seemed always to be in the state of love! However, my opinion was not the point; his feelings and his search only were important.

This was October 1955. Except for reading *The Doors of Perception,* I had no idea then what a psychedelic session was. However, I had had five years of experience in giving therapy. The best attitude, in these sessions, is to cancel out for that period one's opinions and to put aside one's tendency to judge others—just to be there, very attentive and free. Not that this free state is always reached or even reachable—but it is one of the goals. That state of attention would be appropriate, I thought, for the LSD day.

The levels on which we exist are probably infinite—though there are certain levels on which in everyday life, more or less, we meet. But a person in the psychedelic state is on completely different levels. I saw an example of this right at the beginning of our LSD day: Aldous was looking at my hair very closely and smiling that smile which later I recognized almost every time he was in the psychedelic state. With a voice lower and rounder than usual, he said, very slowly, "If you could only *see* your hair." And after a long silence: "You cannot imagine …"

I said nothing but remembered the new rinse I had put on my hair the day before. Did it show? Was it the right color? This is typical of the different levels of consciousness. Aldous was looking at hair, seeing in it the very mystery and wonder of life. He was on a cosmic level, while I, on the cosmetic one, was worrying about the new rinse. I remained silent but was glad when he stopped looking.

Aldous said that day things which I began to understand only later. At the beginning of the day we tried to enter that period of Aldous's childhood of which he remembered very little. Our attempts failed completely. Very soon I gave up trying as I became aware that something awesome was taking place. I did not know what it was, but I felt that one had no right to disturb what was happening with the usual recall techniques of psychotherapy. I felt it would be like trying to find a faded photograph of a great cathedral while being in the

cathedral itself.

That first psychedelic day as a companion to Aldous flowed easily and quietly. There is so much mystery in a psychedelic day, so much happens in the person who is having the experience that he cannot express. That day, as on many others when I was a companion to a "voyager," I became slightly affected by the drug, although I did not take it and never do when I am a companion. It is one of the many unaccountable qualities of these chemicals. Perhaps the breath of a person who has taken LSD has some trace of it; maybe it comes out from the skin pores. Or is this phenomenon due to hypnosis, imagination, energy-transfer, telepathy? Or to a yet unexplained osmotic process? I do not know. It is a fact, however, that some of the most sensitive companions feel a slight effect of LSD when in the presence of a person who has taken it. In slang, this is called "having a free ride." It is desirable that it should happen, for then the companion is not too separated from the voyager—the companion may participate, even though in a minute way, in the voyage. This natural participation is basic to psychedelic companionship.

The first trip with Aldous I remember as a timeless roundness. I was not this timeless roundness; Aldous was. My surface mind was still going at its petty pace, but I was aware enough of the timeless roundness not to disturb it. In Aldous's case it could hardly have been disturbed, but in people not as prepared as he was, feelings, revelation, and reaction can be of a different nature. So are states of consciousness. The companion should not interfere with these states or judge them by word, gesture, or feeling—for it is important that the voyager accept all of them, whether blissful or hellish, intellectual or emotional, or unqualifiable—and relate them to his life, for they are all different aspects of himself and of his history.

As Aldous wrote to Dr. Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, "in *Island* the account of individual [psychedelic] experiences is first hand knowledge." But I had not the slightest idea that day, and for a long time afterwards, that these experiences were to be the raw material for Aldous's writing. I was so totally unaware of anything connected with the process of writing that it was an enormous surprise for me to find much of our lives in *Island.*

That first LSD day was filled with aesthetic revelations. We listened to Bach's Fourth Brandenburg Concerto:

> It was the same, of course, as the Fourth Brandenburg he had listened to so often in the past—the same and yet completely different. This Allegro—he knew it by heart. Which meant that he was in the best possible position to realize that he had never really heard it before…. The Allegro was revealing itself as an

element in the great present Event, a manifestation at one remove of the luminous bliss. Allegro *was* the luminous bliss; it was the knowledgeless understanding of everything apprehended through a particular piece of knowledge; it was un-differentiated awareness broken up into notes and phrases and yet still all-comprehendingly itself. And of course all this belonged to nobody. It was at once in here, out there, and nowhere… . Which was why he was now hearing it for the first time. Unowned, the Fourth Brandenburg had an intensity of beauty, a depth of intrinsic meaning, incomparably greater than anything he had ever found in the same music when it was his private property.

… And tonight's Fourth Brandenburg was not merely an unowned Thing in Itself; it was also, in some impossible way, a Present Event with an infinite duration. Or rather (and still more impossibly, seeing that it had three movements and was being played at its usual speed) it was without duration. The metronome presides over each of its phrases; but the sum of its phrases was not a span of seconds and minutes. There was a *tempo,* but no time. So what was there?

"Eternity." … He began to laugh.

"What's so funny?" she asked.

"Eternity" he answered. "Believe it or not, it's as real as shit."[2]

I could follow Aldous in the world of music and colors; but when he spoke about the fusion of subject and object I did not understand. I did not understand, but I knew that he knew, and that, sometime, I would also know. "Subject and object," he said quietly and lovingly many times. "No separation between subject and object." In the silence of the large house, in the roundness of that day, there was his knowing, there was my ignorance. I was aware of both, and of the absence of conflict between the two. His whole person was emanating love and his voice was full of wonder—"Subject and object—they are one."

That day, partly due to my experience in psychotherapy, I had expected—in spite, alas, of trying not to expect anything—that Aldous might speak about Maria. I had hoped he would, and that he would express emotionally his pain. I had not realized yet that Aldous had his own and best way of directing the unfathomable alchemy by which we continuously transform our feelings and ideas into something else. Aldous transformed his love for Maria, and the pain of her loss, into the death of Lakshmi, an unforgettable passage in *Island.*

During that first LSD day the thought of Maria was often present. We were in her house, where nothing had been changed since her death. We had been silent for a long while, listening to music. Now

the record came to an end—I wanted to stop the machine to avoid the forthcoming shocking click of the automatic stop. To do this I had to walk a few steps away from Aldous toward the record player. As I took the first step I felt suddenly that Maria was present. Present, but not outside of me—present in me. Amazed and fascinated, I knew that I was walking as Maria—that she, not I, was walking. It must have been at the third or fourth step toward the record player and away from Aldous that his voice reached and touched my shoulder. Extremely firm and gentle, the voice said, "Don't ever be anyone else but yourself."

Aldous did not have to remind me of that again.

Now that I have experience in LSD, this episode—which lasted two or three seconds at the most—is less surprising, though no less mysterious. I cannot explain what it was that made me feel, for a second or two, that I was Maria—and what on earth made Aldous realize my fleeting impression? Certainly not his seeing me take two or three steps in a dimly lighted room.

Since that first day as a psychedelic companion I have learned to be prepared to have no secrets from the voyager. A person in the psychedelic state can perceive much more in other human beings than he can when he is in his everyday mind. The voyager may see his companion at different ages of life, at different periods of history, and as different persons, sometimes conflicting with each other. At one time or another, during the psychedelic session, the voyager looks at his companion. Often it is an overwhelming discovery. Anyone who is a companion must give up any attempt at self-hiding. Not only is it useless, but it creates a fatiguing and distracting tension for both. "Who are you?" Spoken or not, the question is loudly asked in almost every voyage. Silent and naked, the companion must know that he cannot answer—for the essence of the answer lies as much in the questioner as in himself.

Chapter 16

1955
Letters
TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 724]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
24 October, 1955

DEAR HUMPHRY,

I fear we shall not meet in New York, unless perhaps on your return from Europe. I do not expect to be in the East until the last days of December—and perhaps later: one never knows, where the theatre is concerned. How long do you propose to stay in Switzerland and England? It would be a happy thing if our trajectories were to intersect on your way home.

I had another most extraordinary experience with mescalin the other day.[1] After reading an account by one of Al's patients—a young Canadian engineer, who had recovered all kinds of buried and chronically debilitating traumatic material under LSD, worked it off with appropriate abreactions and had a beatific vision thrown in as a bonus, so that his whole life was transformed overnight—after reading this, I decided it might be interesting to find out why so much of my childhood is hidden from me, so that I cannot remember large areas of early life. So I sat down to a session with a woman who has had a good deal of experience with eliciting recalls and working off abreactions by methods of dianetics—which do in many cases produce beneficial results, in spite of all that can and must be said against the theorists of dianetics and many of its practitioners. I took half the contents of a 400 mg capsule at ten and the other half about forty minutes later, and the effects began to be strong about an hour and a half after the first dose. There was little vision with the eyes closed, as was the case during my experiment under your auspices, but much transfiguration of the outer world. Dianetic procedures were tried, along the lines described in the account given by *Al's* patient; but there was absolutely no recall. Instead there was something of incomparably greater importance; for what came through the closed door was the realization—not the knowledge, for this wasn't verbal or abstract—but the direct, total awareness, from the inside, so to say, of

Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact. The words, of course, have a kind of indecency and must necessarily ring false, seem like twaddle. But the fact remains. (It was the same fact, evidently, as that which Indians discover in their peyote ceremonies.) I *was* this fact; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this fact occupied the place where I had been. The result was that I did not, as in the first experiment, feel cut off from the human world. I was intensely aware of it, but from the standpoint of the living, primordial cosmic fact of Love. And the things which had entirely occupied my attention on that first occasion I now perceived to be temptations—temptations to escape from the central reality into false, or at least imperfect and partial Nirvanas of beauty and mere knowledge. I talked a good deal about these temptations; commented on the light this realization threw on the legend of St. Anthony, on the Zen statement that, for a Bodhisattva, the Samadhi of Emptiness, Nirvana apart from the world, apart from love, compassion and sentient beings, is as terrible as the pains of hell. And I remember that I quoted the remark of Pascal, that the worship of truth without charity is idolatry, for truth is merely God's idol, which we have no right to worship. And of course the same is true in regard to beauty. (Actually the Platonic trinity of the good, the true and the beautiful is a faulty expression of the facts. Good implies bad and so perpetuates dualism. Love reconciles all the opposites and is the One.)

I also spoke a good deal, to my own subsequent enlightenment, about objects and subjects. How easy, I kept saying, to turn whatever one looked at, even a human face, into a pure object—an object of the most magical beauty, strangeness, intensity of thereness, of pure existence! Do you remember that account given by Blake of seeing a fold of lambs in the corner of a field, and how he approached and suddenly saw that the lambs were pieces of the most exquisite sculpture? This is a good description of the process of objectification. It is a kind of Gorgon's-head effect—you look at a thing solely with a view to seeing truth and beauty, and ir turns into stone—living, changing, self-luminous stone, but still stone, still sculpture. Love de-objectifies the perceived thing or person. At the same time it de-subjectifies the perceiver, who no longer views the outside world with desire or aversion, no longer judges automatically and irrevocably, is no longer an emotionally charged ego, but finds himself an element in the given reality, which is not an affair of objects and subjects, but a cosmic unity of love. The thought of my own and other people's constant effort to impose objectivity and subjectivity on the cosmic fact, thereby creating untold miseries for all concerned, filled me for a moment with intense sadness. But that too, I saw, was a temptation to subjectivity on a higher level, a larger scale.

I looked at some picture books, and was struck especially by a full length portrait by Boucher, of a lady in court dress of the time of Louis XV. It seemed the most perfect example of objectification. The couturier's function is to turn women into objects—objects for men and objects for themselves. Looking at the object they have been turned into by the fashion designer and by their own bovaristic craving to be something other than what in fact they are, the women become self-satisfied and self-dissatisfied subjects, purring with quiet glee or caterwauling with self-pity or spitting and scratching because somebody has blasphemed against the object which is their idol and so has offended the subject which worships the object. And of course the same is true of men—only there didn't happen to be any pictures of masculine fancy dress to remind me of the fact.

I also looked at a volume of photographs of nudes—a lot of them very tricky, bits of bodies taken from odd angles and under queer conditions of light. Objects again. Lust is sexual relations with an object for the benefit of a subject-who may also enjoy, as a kind of bonus, the manifestations of subjective enjoyment proceeding from the object. Love de-objectifics and de-subjectifies, substitutes the primordial fact of unity and the awareness of mutual immanence for a frenzy heightening to despair by the impossibility of that total possession of the objects, at which the subject mistakenly aims.

Among the by-products of this state of being the given fact of love was a kind of intuitive understanding of other people, a "discernment of spirits," in the language of Christian spirituality. I found myself saying things about my dianetic operator, which I didn't know but which, when I said them, turned out to be true. Which, I suppose, is what one would expect if one happens to be manifesting the primordial fact of unity through love and the knowledge of mutual immanance.

Another thing I remember saying was that I now understood such previously incomprehensible events as St. Francis's kissing of the leper. Explanations in terms of masochistic perversion etc. are ridiculous. This sort of thing is merely the overflow of a cosmic fact too large, so to speak, for the receptacle, fashioned by the subjective ego in its life-long relations with objects and not yet completely melted away, so that the new fact finds itself constricted by the old confining habits, with the result that it boils over, so to speak, under pressure and has to express itself in ways which, though not particularly desirable, are completely understandable and even, in the particular context, logical.

Another thing I remember saying and feeling was that I didn't think I should mind dying; for dying must be like this passage from the known (constituted by life-long habits of subject-object existence) to

the unknown cosmic fact.

I have not retained the intensity of my experience of the state of love; but something certainly remains and I hope I shall not allow myself to eclipse it by succumbing to old bad habits. I hope and think that by awareness of what is doing from moment to moment, one may be able to remain out of one's own light.

What emerges as a general conclusion is the confirmation of the fact that mescalin does genuinely open the door, and that everything including the Unknown in its purest, most comprehensive form can come through. After the theophany it is up to the momentarily enlightened individual to "cooperate with grace"—not so much by will as by awareness.

Yours affectionately
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
29 October, 1955

DEAR HUMPHRY,

How strange that our letters should have crossed! I shall be much interested to hear the details of your joint experiment and to repeat the procedure with Gerald and Al, when the latter comes to Los Angeles. From my own experience I cannot see that it is necessary for anyone to do anything to keep the mescalin consciousness on a high level—it stays there by itself, all the time, as far as I'm concerned. A director or master of ceremonies would be useful, as far as I can see, only if you want to keep the consciousness away from the highest level, only if you want to have it directed into other channels on the side, so to speak, to lead it into such "psychic" areas as telepathy etc., or into an awareness of archetypes (if they exist, which I sometimes wonder!) of shadows, animas or animuses as the case may be (all of them, so far as I personally am concerned, entirely hypothetical and Pickwickian entities). It is, of course, perfectly legitimate and desirable to make such experiments, provided of course that one remembers the warnings of the mystics, the only people who know anything about the subject. First, that though miracles take place, of course, they are gratuitous graces, not saving graces, and have ultimately no importance, or anyhow no more importance than anything else—everything being, naturally, infinitely important if you approach it in the right way. Second, that *siddhis* or odd powers, are

fascinating and, being fascinating, dangerous to anyone who is interested in liberation, since they are apt to become, if too much attention is paid to them, distracting impediments. However rich and rewarding, an expedition into the areas on the side of the direct route to the Clear Light, must never be treated idolatrously, as though it had reached the final goal. My own view is that it would be important to break off experimentation from time to time and permit the participants to go, on their own, towards the Clear Light. But perhaps alternation of experimentation and mystical vision would be psychologically impossible; for who, having once come to the realization of the primordial fact of unity in Love, would ever want to return to experimentation on the psychic level? So it will be better to close the proceedings with undirected ascent towards the unknown highest awareness. In this way there will be no need to interrupt the experience of what is supremely important to each participant, in order to bring him back to experiences of lower, ambiguous value. My point is that the opening of the door by mescalin or LSD is too precious an opportunity, too high a privilege to be neglected for the sake of experimentation. There must be experimentation, of course, but it would be wrong if there were nothing else. There is a point where the director must stop directing and leave himself and the other participants to do what they want, or rather what the Unknown Quantity which has taken their place wants to do. Direction can come only, or mainly, from accumulated notional memories of past experience, from the conceptually known; but the highest mystical awareness comes only when there is freedom from the known, when there is no purpose in view, however intrinsically excellent, but pure openness. God's service is perfect freedom and, conversely, perfect freedom is God's service—and where there is a director with a scientific or even an ethical purpose, perfect freedom cannot exist. In practice, I would say, this means that, for at least the last hour of mescalin-induced openness, the director should step aside and leave the unknown quantities of the participants to do what they want. If they want to say things to one another, well and good. If they don't, well and good too. François de Sales's advice to Mme. de Chantal, in regard to "spiritual exercises," was not to do anything at all, but simply to wait. Every experiment, I feel very strongly, should terminate or (if this should be felt to be better) should be interrupted, by a period of simple waiting, with no direction either from the outside or from within. If we don't do this, we shall be, I feel, committing a kind of sin against the Holy Ghost. Direction necessarily excludes the Holy Ghost. Let us give the Unknownest Quantity at least one hour of our openness. The remaining three or four can go to directed experimentation.

And now let me ask you a favour. There is an unfortunate man in this town (I don't know him personally, but he is a friend of a friend), who has been using peyote on himself and other people who want to explore the remoter regions of their consciousness, get rid of traumas and understand the meaning of Christian charity. He is, apparently, a very worthy, earnest fellow; but, unwittingly, he has committed a felony. For in the state of California it is a felony to be in possession of the peyote cactus, and this man had a consignment of the plants sent to him from a nursery gardener in Texas, where peyote is legal. He will have to plead guilty, for he has undoubtedly broken the law. But meanwhile he can make a statement about peyote not being a dangerous drug. He has some of the references and I have given some others. Can you, without too much trouble, supply other references, medical, anthropological and psychological? I'd be most grateful if you would send me any references you know, so that I can pass them on to this poor fellow who is liable, under this law, to be sent to San Quentin for five years, but who may, if character witnesses are good (which they are) and if expert evidence can be marshalled to show that the stuff is not a dangerous drug, get off with a fine and probation.

My love to the family.

Affectionately,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND

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740 North Kings Rd.,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
23 December, 1955

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

I was very glad to get your long, good, most interesting letter. You certainly succeeded in doing an astonishing number of things in a very short time.

We had our LSD experiment last week, with Al, Gerald and my self taking 75 micrograms and [——] taking about thirty. I found the stuff more potent from a physical point of view than mescalin—e.g. it produced the feelings of intense cold, as though one were in shock, which Maria had with the full dose of mescalin. The psychological effects, in my case, were identical with those of mescalin, and I had the same kind of experience as I had on the previous occasion-transfiguration of the external world, and the understanding, through a realization involving the whole man, that Love is the One, and that this is why Atman is identical with Brahman, and why, in spite of

everything, the universe is all right. I had no visions with my eyes shut—even less than I had on the first occasion with mescalin, when the moving geometries were highly organized and, at moments, very beautiful and significant (though at others, very trivial). This time even the patterns were poorly organized, and there was nothing corresponding to what Al and [——] and his pilot friend [——] (isn't that the name?) have described. Evidently, if you are not a congenial or habitual visualizer, you do not get internal visions under mescalin or LSD—only external transfiguration. (Gerald had no visions either. I have not had an opportunity to discuss with him in detail the nature of his experience; but certainly visions with the eyes closed were not part of it.) Time was very different. We played the Bach B-minor suite and the "Musical Offering," and the experience was overpowering. Other music (e.g. Palestrina and Byrd) seemed unsatisfactory by comparison. Bach was a revelation. The tempo of the pieces did not change; nevertheless they went on for centuries, and they were a manifestation, in the plane of art, of perpetual creation, a demonstration of the necessity of death and the self-evidence of immortality, an expression of the essential all-rightness of the universe —for the music was far beyond tragedy, but included death and suffering with everything else in the divine impartiality which is the One, which is Love, which is Being or Istigkeit. Who on earth was John Sebastian? Certainly not the old gent with sixteen children in a stuffy Protestant environment. Rather, an enormous manifestation of the Other—but the Other canalized, controlled, made available through the intervention of the intellect and the senses and emotions. All of us, I think, experienced Bach in the same way. One can imagine a ritual or initiation, in which a whole group of people transported to the Other World by one of the elixirs, would sit together listening to, say, the B-minor Suite and so being brought to a direct, unmediated understanding of the divine nature. (One of the other records we tried was one of traditional Byzantine music—the Greek version of Gregorian. To me at least, this seemed merely grotesque. The single voice bawling away its Alleluias and Kyries seemed like the voice of a gigantic flunkey kowtowing before a considerably magnified Louis XIV. Only polyphony and only the highly organized polyphony (structurally organized and not merely textually organized, as with Palestrina) can convey the nature of reality, which is multiplicity in unity, the reconciliation of opposites, the not-twoness of diversity, the Nirvana-nature of Samsara, the Love which is the bridge between objective and subjective, good and evil, death and life.) On this occasion I did not have any spontaneous psi awareness, and our attempt to induce psi deliberately seemed after a few minutes so artificial and bogus that we gave it up. Al reported psi awareness of

the others in the group, and Gerald exhibited the same kind of prophetic discernment of spirits, which characterized his first mescalin experience. Whether I personally shall ever be able to do psi experiments under LSD or mescalin, I don't know. Certainly, if future experiments should turn out to be like these last two, I should feel that such experiments were merely childish and pointless. Which I suppose they are, for purposes of Understanding—though not at all so, for purposes of Knowledge. Meanwhile let me advise you, if ever you use mescalin or LSD in therapy, to try the effect of the B-minor suite. More than anything, I believe, it will serve to lead the patient's mind (wordlessly, without any suggestion or covert bullying by doctor or parson) to the central, primordial Fact, the understanding of which is perfect health during the time of the experience, and the memory of the understanding of which may serve as an antidote to mental sickness in the future. I feel sure, however, that it would be most unwise to subject a patient to sentimental religious music or even good religious music, if it were tragic (e.g., the Mozart or Verdi "Requiems," or Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis"). John Sebastian is safer because, ultimately, truer to reality.

To return to your letter. Of course the stroboscope effect is not retinal. One of the stroboscopic effects, as experienced by my friend Dr. Cholden, was that the patterns he was seeing under LSD turned, when he sat under the stroboscope, into ineffably beautiful Japanese landscapes.

I wish old Jung were not so hipped on symbols. The trouble with Germans is that they always remember the silliest line in Goethe —"alles Vergaengliche ist nur ein Gleichnis." A bigger lie was never uttered. All transiences are timelessly themselves and, being themselves, are manifestations of the One, which is totally present in any particular—if we could only see it. The symbol business has been a very smelly red herring, leading him off the trail of Given Realities "out there" in the mind (just as they are out there in the material world, in spite of Berkeley etc.), and leading it into the jungle, about which he and his followers write in that inimitably turgid and copious style, which is the Jungian hallmark.

The play seems to be in process of being postponed—the produce) having made such a muddle that production at the date contracted for seems now out of the question. As the postponement will be to an election season, which is notoriously the worst possible theatrical season, I am not too happy. But this is what happens when one gets into the clutches of theatrical people. One asks for trouble and, by heaven, one gets what one asks for.

Give my love to Jane and the poetess. I hope the coming year will bring you all contentment, happiness, growth, understanding.

Yours affectionately,
Aldous

Chapter 17

1956
Heaven and Hell
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Huxley described this book as "a long essay … about visionary experience and its relation to art and the traditional conceptions of the Other World. It springs of course from the mescalin experience, which has thrown, I find, a great deal of light on all kinds of things" (Bedford, p. 591). *The peyote cactus and its psychoactive alkaloid, much more than LSD, produces visual effects which Huxley compares to painting and other forms of popular visionary art such as magic lantern shows, fireworks, technicolor movies, and the stroboscope—in the latter instance anticipating Acid Rock Light Shows of the* 1960s. *The bio-chemical basis of visionary experience and the various methods of attaining it apart from "chemical access" are discussed, as is the psychological basis for positive or negative visionary experience, foreshadowing the uset and setting" parameters of later researchers of the Harvard Psychedelic Research Project.*

In this sequel to The Doors of Perception *Huxley again takes his title from Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."*

THE NEGATIVE VISIONARY experience is often accompanied by bodily sensations of a very special and characteristic kind. Blissful visions arc generally associated with a sense of separation from the body, a feeling of deindividualization. (It is, no doubt, this feeling of deindividualization which makes it possible for the Indians who practice the peyote cult to use the drug not merely as a short cut to the visionary world, but also as an instrument for creating a loving solidarity within the participating group.) When the visionary experience is terrible and the world is transfigured for the worse, individualization is intensified and the negative visionary finds himself associated with a body that seems to grow progressively more tense, more tightly packed, until he finds himself at last reduced to being the agonized consciousness of an inspissated lump of matter, no bigger than a stone that can be held between the hands.

It is worth remarking, that many of the punishments described in the various accounts of hell are punishments of pressure and constriction. Dante's sinners are buried in mud, shut up in the trunks

of trees, frozen solid in blocks of ice, crushed beneath stones. The *Inferno* is psychologically true. Many of its pains are experienced by schizophrenics, and by those who have taken mescalin or lysergic acid under unfavorable conditions.

What is the nature of these unfavorable conditions? How and why is heaven turned into hell? In certain cases the negative visionary experience is the result of predominantly physical causes. Mescalin tends, after ingestion, to accumulate in the liver. If the liver is diseased, the associated mind may find itself in hell. But what is more important for our present purposes is the fact that negative visionary experience may be induced by purely psychological means. Fear and anger bar the way to the heavenly Other World and plunge the mescalin taker into hell.

And what is true of the mescalin taker is also true of the person who sees visions spontaneously or under hypnosis. Upon this psychological foundation has been reared the theological doctrine of saving faith—a doctrine to be met with in all the great religious traditions of the world. Eschatologists have always found it difficult to reconcile their rationality and their morality with the brute facts of psychological experience. As rationalists and moralists, they feel that good behavior should be rewarded and that the virtuous deserve to go to heaven. But as psychologists they know that virtue is not the sole or sufficient condition of blissful visionary experience. They know that works alone are powerless and that it is faith, or loving confidence, which guarantees that visionary experience shall be blissful.

Negative emotions—the fear which is the absence of confidence, the hatred, anger or malice which exclude love—are the guarantee that visionary experience, if and when it comes, shall be appalling. The Pharisee is a virtuous man; but his virtue is of the kind which is compatible with negative emotion. His visionary experiences are therefore likely to be infernal rather than blissful.

The nature of the mind is such that the sinner who repents and makes an act of faith in a higher power is more likely to have a blissful visionary experience than is the self-satisfied pillar of society with his righteous indignations, his anxiety about possessions and pretensions, his ingrained habits of blaming, despising and condemning. Hence the enormous importance attached, in all the great religious traditions, to the state of mind at the moment of death.

Visionary experience is not the same as mystical experience. Mystical experience is beyond the realm of opposites. Visionary experience is still within that realm. Heaven entails hell, and “going to heaven” is no more liberation than is the descent into horror. Heaven is merely a vantage point, from which the divine Ground can be more clearly seen than on the level of ordinary individualized existence.

If consciousness survives bodily death, it survives, presumably, on every mental level—on the level of mystical experience, on the level of visionary experience, on the level of infernal visionary experience, and on the level of everyday individual existence. In life, as we know by experience and observation, even the blissful visionary experience tends to change its sign if it persists too long.

Many schizophrenics have their times of heavenly happiness; but the fact that (unlike the mescalin taker) they do not know when, if ever, they will be permitted to return to the reassuring banality of everyday experience causes even heaven to seem appalling. But for those who, for whatever reason, are appalled, heaven turns into hell, bliss into horror, the Clear Light into the hateful glare of the land of lit-upness.

Something of the same kind may happen in the posthumous state. After having had a glimpse of the unbearable splendor of ultimate Reality, and after having shuttled back and forth between heaven and hell, most souls find it possible to retreat into that more reassuring region of the mind, where they can use their own and other people's wishes, memories and fancies to construct a world very like that in which they lived on earth.

Of those who die an infinitesimal minority are capable of immediate union with the divine Ground, a few are capable of supporting the visionary bliss of heaven, a few find themselves in the visionary horrors of hell and are unable to escape; the great majority end up in the kind of world described by Swedenborg and the mediums. From this world it is doubtless possible to pass, when the necessary conditions have been fulfilled, to worlds of visionary bliss or the final enlightenment.

My own guess is that modern spiritualism and ancient tradition are both correct. There *is* a posthumous state of the kind described in Sir Oliver Lodge's book *Raymond;* but there is also a heaven of blissful visionary experience; there is also a hell of the same kind of appalling visionary experience as is suffered here by schizophrenics and some of those who take mescalin; and there is also an experience, beyond time, of union with the divine Ground.

Chapter 18

1956
Brave New World Revisited

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Between July 1955 *and April* 1957 *Huxley produced a monthly essay for* Esquire, *writing on a wide variety of topics under the heading "From the Study of Aldous Huxley." The following retrospective analysis deals with predictions made in his famous novel published a quarter century earlier, and hazards further guesses as to the future of civilization. "The Soma of* Brave New World *is no longer a distant dream"; the tranquilizers Miltown, Equanil, etc. possess many of the same characteristics. The issue is "drug of choice"—a prophetic expression of an idea that was to become a cliche by the late* 1960s. *The drugs Huxley found most interesting were mescalin and LSD, but he expected "other mind transformers with even more remarkable properties" would be developed by scientists.*

THE MOST DISTRESSING thing that can happen to a prophet is to be proved wrong; the next most distressing thing is to be proved right. In the twenty-five years that have elapsed since *Brave New World* was written, I have undergone both these experiences. Events have proved me distressingly wrong; and events have proved me distressingly right.

Here are some of the points on which I was wrong. By the early Thirties Einstein had equated mass and energy, and there was already talk of chain reactions; but the Brave New Worlders knew nothing of nuclear fission. In the early Thirties, too, we knew all about conservation and irreplaceable resources; but their supply of metals and mineral fuel was just as copious in the seventh century After Ford as ours is today. In actual fact the raw material situation will already be subcritical by AF 600 and the atom will be the principal source of industrial power. Again, the Brave New Worlders had solved the population problem and knew how to maintain a permanently favorable relationship between human numbers and natural resources. In actual fact, will our descendants achieve this happy consummation within the next six centuries? And if they *do* achieve it, will it be by dint of rational planning, or through the immemorial agencies of pestilence, famine and internecine warfare? It is, of course, impossible

to say. The only thing we can predict with a fair measure of certainty is that humanity (if its rulers decide to refrain from collective suicide) will be traveling at vertiginous speed along one of the most dangerous and congested stretches of its history.

The Brave New Worlders produced their children in biochemical factories. But though bottled babies are not completely out of the question, it is virtually certain that our descendants will in fact remain viviparous. Mother's Day is in no danger of being replaced by Bottle Day. My prediction was made for strictly literary purposes, and not as a reasoned forecast of future history. In this matter I knew in advance that I should be proved wrong.

From biology we now pass to politics. The dictatorship described in *Brave New World* was global and, in its own peculiar way, benevolent. In the light of current events and developing tendencies, I sadly suspect that in this forecast, too, I may have been wrong. True, the seventh century After Ford is still a long way off, and it is possible that, by then, hard economic necessity, or the social chaos resulting from nuclear warfare, or military conquest by one Great Power, or some grisly combination of all three, will have bludgeoned our descendants into doing what we ought to be doing now, from motives of enlightened self-interest and common humanity—namely, to collaborate for the common good. In time of peace, and when things are going tolerably well, people cannot be expected to vote for measures which, though ultimately beneficial, may be expected to have certain disagreeable consequences in the short run. Divisive forces are more powerful than those which made the union. Vested interests in languages, philosophies of life, table manners, sexual habits, political, ecclesiastical and economic organizations are sufficiently powerful to block all attempts, by rational and peaceful methods, to unite mankind for its own good. And then there is nationalism. With its Fifty-Seven Varieties of tribal gods, nationalism is the religion of the twentieth century. We may be Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians or Atheists; but the fact remains that there is only one faith for which large masses of us are prepared to die and kill, and that faith is nationalism. That nationalism will remain the dominant religion of the human race for the next two or three centuries at the very least seems all too probable. If total, nuclear war should be avoided, we may expect to see, not the rise of a single world state, but the continuance, in worsening conditions, of the present system, under which national states compete for markets and raw materials and prepare for partial wars. Most of these states will probably be dictatorships. Inevitably so; for the increasing pressure of population upon resources will make domestic conditions more difficult and international competition more

intense. To prevent economic breakdown and to repress popular discontent, the governments of hungry countries will be tempted to enforce ever-stricter controls. Furthermore, chronic undernourishment reduces physical energy and disturbs the mind. Hunger and self-government are incompatible. Even where the average diet provides three thousand calories a day, it is hard enough to make democracy work. In a society, most of whose members are living on seventeen hundred to two thousand calories a day, it is simply impossible. The undernourished majority will always be ruled, from above, by the well-fed few. As population increases (twenty-seven hundred million of us are now adding to our numbers at the rate of forty million a year, and this increase is increasing according to the rules of compound interest); as geometrically increasing demands press more and more heavily on static or, at best, arithmetically increasing supplies; as standards of living are forced down and popular discontent is forced up; as the general scramble for diminishing resources becomes ever fiercer, these national dictatorships will tend to become more oppressive at home, more ruthlessly competitive abroad. "Government," says one of the Brave New Worlders, "is an affair of sitting, not hitting. You rule with the brains and buttocks, not the fists." But where there are many competing national dictatorships, each in trouble at home and each preparing for total or partial war against its neighbors, hitting tends to be preferred to sitting, fists as an instrument of policy, to brains and the "masterly inactivity" (to cite Lord Salisbury's immortal phrase) of the hindquarters. In politics, the near future is likely to be closer to George Orwell's 1984 than to *Brave New World.*

Let me now consider a few of the points on which, I fear, I may have been right. The Brave New Worlders were the heirs and exploiters of a new kind of revolution, and this revolution was, in effect, the theme of my fable. Past revolutions have all been in fields external to the individual as a psychophysical organism—in the field, for example, of ecclesiastical organization and religious dogma, in the field of economics, in the field of political organization, in the field of technology. The coming revolution—the revolution whose consequences are described in *Brave New World*—will affect men and women, not peripherally, but at the very core of their organic being. The older revolutionaries sought to change the social environment in the hope (if they were idealists and not mere power seekers) of changing human nature. The coming revolutionaries will make their assault directly on human nature as they find it, in the minds and bodies of their victims or, if you prefer, their beneficiaries.

Among the Brave New Worlders, the control of human nature was achieved by eugenic and dysgenic breeding, by systematic

conditioning during infancy and, later on, by "hypnopaedia," or instruction during sleep. Infant conditioning is as old as Pavlov and hypnopaedia, though rudimentary, is already a well-established technique. Phonographs with built-in clocks, which turn them on and off at regular intervals during the night, are already on the market and are being used by students of foreign languages, by actors in a hurry to memorize their parts, by parents desirous of curing their children of bed-wetting and other troublesome habits, by self-helpers seeking moral and physical improvement through autosuggestion and "affirmations of positive thought." That the principles of selective breeding, infant conditioning and hypnopaedia have not yet been applied by governments is due, in the democratic countries, to the lingering, liberal conviction that persons do not exist for the state, but that the state exists for the good of persons; and in the totalitarian countries to what may be called revolutionary conservatism—attachment to yesterday's revolution instead of the revolution of tomorrow. There is, however, no reason for complacently believing that this revolutionary conservatism will persist indefinitely. In totalitarian hands, applied psychology is already achieving notable results. One third of all the American prisoners captured in Korea succumbed, at least partially, to Chinese brainwashing, which broke down the convictions installed by their education and childhood conditioning, and replaced these comforting axioms by doubt, anxiety and a chronic sense of guilt. This was achieved by thoroughly old-fashioned procedures, which combined straightforward instruction with what may be called conventional psychotherapy in reverse, and made no use of hypnosis, hypnopaedia or mind-modifying drugs. If all or even some of these more powerful methods had been employed, brainwashing would probably have been successful with all the prisoners, and not with a mere thirty per cent of them. In their vague, rhetorical way, speech-making politicians and sermon-preaching clergymen like to say that the current struggle is not material, but spiritual—an affair not of machines, but of ideas. They forget to add that the effectiveness of ideas depends very largely on the way in which they are inculcated. A true and beneficent idea may be so ineptly taught as to be without effect on the lives of individuals and societies. Conversely, grotesque and harmful notions may be so skillfully drummed into people's heads that, filled with faith, they will rush out and move mountains—to the greater glory of the devil and their own destruction. At the present time the dynamism of totalitarian ideas is greater than the dynamism of liberal, democratic ideas. This is not due, of course, to the intrinsic superiority of totalitarian ideas. It is due partly to the fact that, in a world where population is fast outrunning resources, ever larger measures of

governmental control become necessary—and it is easier to exercise centralized control by totalitarian than by democratic methods. Partly, too, it is due to the fact that the means employed for the dissemination of totalitarian ideas are more effective, and are used more systematically, than the means employed for disseminating democratic and liberal ideas. These more effective methods of totalitarian propaganda, education and brain washing are, as we have seen, pretty old-fashioned. Sooner or later, however, the dictators will abandon their revolutionary conservatism and, along with it, the old-world procedures inherited from the pre-psychological and palaeo-pharmacological past. After which, heaven help us all!

Among the legacies of the proto-pharmacological past must be numbered our habit, when we feel in need of a lift, a release from tension, a mental vacation from unpleasant reality, of drinking alcohol or, if we happen to belong to a non-Western culture, of smoking hashish or opium, of chewing coca leaves or betel or any one of scores of intoxicants. The Brave New Worlders did none of these things; they merely swallowed a tablet or two of a substance called Soma. This, needless to say, was not the same as the Soma mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures—a rather dangerous drug derived from some as yet unidentified plant native to South Central Asia—but a synthetic, possessing "all the virtues of alcohol and Christianity, none of their defects." In small doses the Soma of the Brave New Worlders was a relaxant, an inducer of euphoria, a fosterer of friendliness and social solidarity. In medium doses it transfigured the external world and acted as a mild hallucinant; and in large doses it was a narcotic. Virtually all the Brave New Worlders thought themselves happy. This was due in part to the fact that they had been bred and conditioned to take the place assigned to them in the social hierarchy, in part to the sleep-teaching which had made them content with their lot and in part to Soma and their ability, by its means, to take holidays from unpleasant circumstances and their unpleasant selves.

All the natural narcotics, stimulants, relaxants and hallucinants known to the modern botanist and pharmacologist were discovered by primitive man and have been in use from time immemorial. One of the first things that Homo sapiens did with his newly developed rationality and self-consciousness was to set them to work finding out ways to by-pass analytical thinking and to transcend or, in extreme cases, temporarily obliterate, the isolating awareness of the self. Trying all things that grew in field or forest, they held fast to that which, in this context, seemed good—everything, that is to say, that would change the quality of consciousness, would make it different, no matter how, from everyday feeling, perceiving and thinking. Among the Hindus, rhythmic breathing and mental concentration

have, to some extent, taken the place of the mind-transforming drugs used elsewhere. But even in the land of yoga, even among the religious and even for especially religious purposes, cannabis indica has been freely used to supplement the efforts of spiritual exercises. The habit of taking vacations from the more or less purgatorial world, which we have created for ourselves, is universal. Moralists may denounce it; but, in the teeth of disapproving talk and repressive legislation, the habit persists, and mind-transforming drugs are everywhere available. The Marxian for mula, "Religion is the opium of the people," is reversible, and one can say, with even more truth, that "Opium is the religion of the people." In other words, mind-transformation, however induced (whether by devotional or ascetic or psycho-gymnastic or chemical means), has always been felt to be one of the highest, perhaps the very highest, of all attainable goods. Up to the present, governments have thought about the problem of mind-transforming chemicals only in terms of prohibition or, a little more realistically, of control and taxation. None, so far, has considered it in its relation to individual well-being and social stability; and very few (thank heaven!) have considered it in terms of Machiavellian statecraft. Because of vested interests and mental inertia, we persist in using alcohol as our main mind-transformer—just as our neolithic ancestors did. We know that alcohol is responsible for a high proportion of our traffic accidents, our crimes of violence, our domestic miseries; and yet wc make no effort to replace this old-fashioned and extremely unsatisfactory drug by some new, less harmful and more enlightening mind-transformer. Among the Brave New Worlders, Noah's prehistoric invention of fermented liquor has been made obsolete by a modern synthetic, specifically designed to contribute to social order and the happiness of the individual, and to do so at the minimum physiological cost.

In the society described in my fable, Soma was used as an instrument of statecraft. The tyrants were benevolent, but they were still tyrants. Their subjects were not bludgeoned into obedience; they were chemically coerced to love their servitude, to co-operate willingly and even enthusiastically in the preservation of the social hierarchy. By the malignant or the ignorant, anything and everything can be used badly. Alcohol, for example, has been used, in small doses, to facilitate the exchange of thought in a symposium (literally, a drinking party) of philosophers. It has also been used, as the slave traders used it, to facilitate kidnapping. Scopolamine may be used to induce "twilight sleep"; it may also be used to increase suggestibility and soften up political prisoners. Heroin may be used to control pain; it may also be used (as it is said to have been used by the Japanese during their occupation of China) to produce an incapacitating

addiction in a dangerous adversary. Directed by the wrong people, the coming revolution could be disastrous, in its own way, as a nuclear and bacteriological war. By systematically using the psychological, chemical and electronic instruments already in existence (not to mention those new and better devices which the future holds in store), a tyrannical oligarchy could keep the majority in permanent and willing subjection. This is the prophecy I made in *Brave New World.* I hope I may be proved wrong, but am sorely afraid that I may be proved right.

Meanwhile it should be pointed out that Soma is not intrinsically evil. On the contrary, a harmless but effective mind-transforming drug might prove a major blessing. And anyhow (as history makes abundantly clear) there will never be any question of getting rid of chemical mind-transformers altogether. The choice confronting us is not a choice between Soma and nothing; it is a choice between Soma and alcohol, Soma and opium, Soma and hashish, ololiuqui, peyote, datura, agaric and all the rest of the natural mind-transformers; between Soma and such products of scientific chemistry and pharmacology as ether, chloral, veronal, Benzedrine and the barbiturates. In a word, we have to choose between a more or less harmless all-round drug and a wide variety of more or less harmful and only partially effective drugs. And this choice will not be delayed until the seventh century After Ford. Pharmacology is on the march. The Soma of *Brave New World* is no longer a distant dream. Indeed, something possessing many of the characteristics of Soma is already with us. I refer to the most recent of the tranquilizing agents—the Happiness Pill, as its users affectionately call it, known in America under the trade names of Miltown and Equanil. These Happiness Pills exert a double action; they relax the tension in striped muscle and so relax the associated tensions in the mind. At the same time they act on the enzyme system of the brain in such a way as to prevent disturbances arising in the hypothalamus from interfering with the workings of the cortex. On the mental level, the effect is a blessed release from anxiety and self-regarding emotivity.

In my fable the savage expresses his belief that the advantages of Soma must be paid for by losses on the highest human levels. Perhaps he was right. The universe is not in the habit of giving us something for nothing. And yet there is a great deal to be said for a pill which enables us to assume an attitude towards circumstances of detachment, ataraxia, “holy indifference.” The moral worth of an action cannot be measured exclusively in terms of intention. Hell is paved with good intentions, and we have to take some account of results. Rational and kindly behavior tends to produce good results and these results remain good even when the behavior which

produced them was itself produced by a pill. On the other hand, can we with impunity replace systematic self-discipline by a chemical? It remains to be seen.

Of all the consciousness-transforming drugs the most interesting, if not the most immediately useful, are those which, like lysergic acid and mescalin, open the door to what may be called the Other World of the mind. Many workers are already exploring the effects of these drugs, and we may be sure that other mind-transformers, with even more remarkable properties, will be produced in the near future. What man will ultimately do with these extraordinary elixirs, it is impossible to say. My own guess is that they are destined to play a part in human life at least as great as the part played, up till now, by alcohol, and incomparably more beneficent.

Chapter 19

1956
Letters

This was a vitally energetic and creative year for Huxley. He remarried, moved to a new house, travelled and lectured; Heaven and Hell *was published,* Island *begun. He experimented with psychedelic twice in* 1956. *The first occasion was with Gerald Heard and two medical investigators, during which he and Heard were administered a new tranquilizer called Frenquel to reverse the effects of a strong dose of mescalin. The resultant temporary bring-down Huxley likened to the Fall, and rushed off to re-read* Paradise Lost. *Later, he and Laura Archera Huxley participated in a low-dose LSD session to determine the power of hypnosis in psychedelic recall*

Letters to Dr. Osmond written during this period discuss the framework of Island *and a host of drugs: soma of the ancient Aryans,* Psilosybe mexicana *mushroom eaters of Mexico, ayahuasca (yagé) drinkers of South America. The picture of research with psychedelic synthetics in Los Angeles (then the center for such experimentation in the U.S.) is fairly bleak. His "lunatic-fringe mair strengthens his belief that psychedelic research should be conducted "in the relative privacy of learned journals." The coining of the term "psychedelic," and Huxley's choice, are discussed in a famous letter and another that has just come to light. In two eloquent letters written to women he expressed his deepest spiritual-philosophical speculations on the new drugs. Plans for a musical comedy version of* Brave New World *stimulated a lyrical outburst presented in one of the following letters.*

TO DR. HOWARD FABING 1 [SMITH 736]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
20 January, 1956

DEAR HOWARD,

I hope you had a pleasant and fruitful stay at Monterey and that you are now safely home again. Your visit here was a memorable event, and I am most grateful—and so, I know, is Gerald—for the experiences you made possible and for the opportunities of discussing

and evaluating them. If and when I take my eastward trip, I look forward to repeating the experiment and renewing the discussions.

Meanwhile I have been thinking over one of the subjects we raised in our conversation on Sunday morning—the use of hypnosis in conjunction with mescalin or LSD. It seems to me that hypnosis might prove very useful in three ways. First, to prepare the subject for the taking of the drug. Put him into a light trance and talk to him about what he is likely to experience—pointing out that there is nothing to be frightened of. What we ordinarily call "reality" is merely that slice of total fact which our biological equipment, our linguistic heritage (see Benjamin Whorf) and our social conventions of thought and feeling make it possible for us to apprehend. (The ideas contained in [J. J.] Von Uexküll's classical book on Umweltlehre or "environmentology" are fundamental in this context. The paramecium, the sea urchin and the dog—each has its universe, and each of the universes is very different from the others. Man's biologically, socially and linguistically conditioned universe is much richer than that of the other animals; but it is still only a small slice of the melon. Mescalin and LSD permit us to cut another kind of slice—a slice which is not much good to us as creatures who have to survive and compete, but may be extremely helpful to us in so far as we are creatures capable and desirous of understanding. In simple terms, ideas of this kind could be conveyed to the subject under hypnosis, before the drug is taken. This should prevent him from going into a panic on account of the mere strangeness of the experience.

In the second place, it would be interesting to see what could be done with hypnosis while the subject is under the drug's influence. To start with, is a mescalinized person hypnotizable? If so, can hypnotic suggestions direct his new found visionary capacities into specific channels—e.g. into the realm of buried memories of childhood, or into specific areas of thought and imagery. Can we suggest to him, for example, that he should see an episode from the *Arabian Nights,* or from the Gospel, or in the realm of archetypal symbols or mythology?

Finally, it would be interesting to hypnotize the person after he came back from mescalin, trying to make him re-experience what he lived through under mescalin, but without the aid of the drug. This, it seems to me, should be started while the effects of the drug are wearing off. Try to prolong and re-enhance the experience by suggestion. At the same time give a posthypnotic suggestion to the effect that there will be no difficulty in recapturing the full experience at later dates. Repeat the experiment on the following days and see if hypnosis can establish not merely a memory of the mescalin experience, but a total recall or even a new experience of the same kind. If this seems to work, give post-hypnotic suggestions to the

effect that the person will be able to enter the visionary state at will under auto-suggestion. This vivid recall and re-activation of visionary experience may turn out to be impossible. On the other hand it may not. But I am sure the experiment is worth trying—and trying on a number of subjects, since there is such an enormous difference in these matters between the capacities of one person and another. That some people enter the visionary world under hypnosis, I know experimentally. My wife, for example, would enter a world having the same sort of luminosity and significance as the mescalin world, where there were vast landscapes, mostly of the desert, and a variety of personages. It would be interesting to discover whether, as the result of the door having once been opened by chemical means, persons ordinarily incapable of entering the "other world" spontaneously or through hypnosis would find it possible to dispense with the chemical key and reach the mescalin destination by purely psychological means (whatever *that* phrase may mean!).

Please remember me to Dr. P. and to Bobby Brown, whom I think of with much affection.

Yours,
Aldous Huxley

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 737]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
21 January, 1956

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

Many thanks for your letter, I hope that the Saskatchewan winter is becoming slightly less bleak. Certainly it seems to be a pretty bad winter everywhere—intense drought here, disastrous rains in the Pacific Northwest, appalling cold in the Mid West and the Eastern states, also in Europe. Perhaps our H-bomb fooleries have something to do with it—inopportune dust clouds triggering precipitation and cloud formation in unexpected ways. Most ignorant of what we are most assured (our glassy essence), like angry apes we play our fantastic tricks not only before high heaven, but *in* it.

And talking of glassy essences, Gerald and I went through another mescalin experience last week. This time with Dr. Howard Fabing of Cincinnati—a very nice, open-minded and intelligent man—together with another M.D. and a young woman pharmacologist, Dr. Barbara Brown, mainly responsible for developing Frenquel. Fabing wanted to try the effect of Frenquel on us, so as to get our impressions of the cutting short of the mescalin experience by this new tranquillizer. He

gave us 500 mgs of a particularly pure brand of mescalin, specially made up for him by a chemist at Antioch College. The effects were powerful. A good deal of vision with the eyes closed—though never consistent or long-drawn, just moving geometries modulating or on the verge of modulating into architectures. The time sense was altered most profoundly, and there was literally a long life time of experience of beauty, being and love. Fabing gave us a massive intravenous dose of Frenquel about two hours after the ingestion of the mescalin. The effects were noticeable within a quarter of an hour. It was a distressing experience, like that described by Emily Brontë.

> O dreadful is the check—intense the agony—
> When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see,
> (to see and hear in the manner of a separate, encapsulated ego)
> When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
> (to think discursively and biologically, utilitarianly)
> The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

It was an experience of the Fall, made the more distressing by the fact that returning selfhood was accompanied by dizziness and general physical derangement akin to those experienced when one is drunk. (How curious, it suddenly occurs to me, that Milton's Adam and Eve should feel tight after eating the fruit! I must look up the passage in *Paradise Lost.)* This tipsy experience of the Fall lasted about forty-five minutes, then we both returned to the mescalin condition. Evidently intravenous Frenquel is rapidly excreted. Once it is safely out of the way, the mescalin re-emerges from its hiding place in the liver. Fabing is now convinced that, to be effective, the Frenquel should be given in small doses repeated at short intervals, not in a single large dose. Both Gerald and I continued to feel the effects until far into the night (we took the thing at three in the afternoon). At about six or six-thirty I got up and walked out onto the veranda outside the front door. On the wall of the house, between the windows of the large living room, are two charcoal outlines, still faintly visible, made by my brother-in-law, Joep Nicolas, four or five years ago, of Maria's and my profile—outlines traced round the shadows cast by the setting sun. I did not actually see these outlines, as there was very little light. But suddenly I thought of them and was overwhelmed by intense grief. I don't know how long the weeping lasted, but I must have discharged a great accumulation of unshed tears. It was something very painful but very necessary.

I am enclosing the copy of a letter I am sending to Fabing on the subject of possible experiments with hypnosis, before, during and after the administration of mescalin. I hope he will try them—and I hope

you will do so too; for there may be significant possibilities along this line.

My love to Jane.

Yours affectionately,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 740]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
14 March, 1956

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

Thank you for your good and most interesting letter. I think you are right about the Indians.[2] Soma, in India, was taken only by the priests—and it was a dangerous drug, from which many people died. The votaries of Dionysus got drunk together—but alcohol is hardly an elixir, just booze. I dare say some of the tropical takers of mind-changing stuff may have hit upon the Indian device independently—but where can one find out? And anyhow they are too remote and too primitive to be of much significance to us. Gordon Wasson's mushroom eaters in southern Mexico evidently used an elixir in small groups, directed by a priest or priestess. His account [3] of his own experience with the mushrooms in such a group is very interesting. The symptoms seem to have been almost identical with those of peyote—including the vomiting. He was immensely impressed by the whole procedure—and when a partner in J. P. Morgan is impressed by this sort of thing, it must be pretty impressive! I hope you will find out more about your Native American Church in Saskatchewan. I have a standing invitation from some Indian peyotists in Ponca City, Oklahoma, to attend one of their meetings, but have been unable to accept so far owing to the tyranny of space and time.

I have done three articles for the *Sunday Times* on "Brave New World Revisited"—one on the future from the demographer's point of view, one on the relevance of the *BNW* political set-up to the immediate future, and the third on soma *(BNW* variety), its relevance to the present mass consumption of "Happy Pills," (Miltown-Equanil) and its social, ethical and psychological significance. I hope to go further into this problem when I embark on my projected phantasy about an imaginary society, whose purpose is to get its members to realize their highest potentialities. I shall place the fable, not in the future, but on an island, hypothetical, in the Indian ocean, not far from the Andamans, and inhabited by people who are descended from Buddhist colonists from the mainland, and so know all about Tantra

(which is more than I do—but one can do some learning and some pretending!). To build a bridge between them and us, I postulate an Englishman who made a fortune in the most cynical way in the later days of the East India Company, who came to explore the island and stayed because he saw, in a kind of psychological conversion, that its people knew most of the answers. He stays, organizes a kind of East-West school of wisdom and is on hand, as an old man, when another Englishman comes ashore. His history is that of a youth brought up in an Evangelical household, breaking down into madness as a consequence, going to an asylum (I have been reading Zilboorg and other books to get the full flavour of the horror of Early Victorian madhouses), gets cured owing to the arrival at the asylum of a reasonable and human superintendent, like Dr. Conolly, is sent on a voyage for his health and winds up on the island, where the older man takes him in hand, re-educates him to a sacramental view of sex and other natural functions, puts him through an initiation, with a local elixir playing an important part in the proceedings etc. etc. When he finally returns to England, he is a really sane and fully developed human being—so much so that he very soon finds himself confined, once again, to an asylum by his undeveloped and deranged relatives. Meanwhile of course, the island gets overrun by one of the colonial powers, and all its wisdom is systematically stamped out—as was the case, on a lower level of achievement, when Britain ruined the traditional social order in Burma—largely by introducing, with the best possible intentions, a coherent system of law in place of the logically indefensible, but psychologically successful, no-system of local arbitration by headmen-without-authority. This framework should permit a full exposition of what ought to be, what could be perhaps, and what has been and what actually is… .

Yours affectionately
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 744]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, *Cal.*
30 March, 1956

DEAR HUMPHRY,

Thank you for your letter, which I shall answer only briefly, since I look forward to talking to you at length in New York before very long. About a name for these drugs—what a problem! I have looked into Liddell and Scott and find that there is a verb phaneroein, “to make

visible or manifest," and an adjective phaneros, meaning "manifest, open to sight, evident." The word is used in botany—phanerogam as opposed to cryptogam. Psychodetic is something I don't quite get the hang of it. Is it an analogue of geodetic, geodesy? If so, it would mean mind-dividing, as geodesy means earth-dividing, from gē and daiein. Could you call these drugs psychophans? or phaneropsychic drugs? Or what about phanerothymes? Thymos means soul, in its primary usage, and is the equivalent of Latin animus. The word is euphonious and easy to pronounce; besides it has relatives in the jargon of psychology —e.g. cyclothyme. On the whole I think this is better than psychophan or phaneropsychic.

I expect to be flying east on the tenth, or eleventh, and will let you know before then where we shall be staying—possibly not in a hotel at all, but in a borrowed apartment.

Yours,
Aldous

Phanerothyme—substantive. Phanerothymic—adjective.
To make this trivial world sublime,
Take a half a gramme of phanerothyme"

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 747]

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740 North Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46, Cal.
29 June, 1956

DEAR HUMPHRY,

We missed you very much at our little conference, and on your side I think, if you had been there, you would have been greatly stimulated and interested by Puharich's report on the effects of the cages and of the release into their atmosphere of positively or negatively charged ions. If his work is confirmed, there will be from now on a method by which (so far only in sensitives) psi faculties can be turned on to their most improbable maximum by the simple pressing of a switch. Having established a standard electronic environment, Puharich is now going to try, systematically, the effect upon psi of various drugs, odours, sound stimuli and the like. It should be a most profitable exploration.

Al [Hubbard] too was in great form. His methods of exposition are a bit muddled; but I suppose he and his group have by now a mass of written material on their cases—material which will show how the other line of experimentation works. For obviously one must proceed on both lines—the pure-scientific, analytical line of Puharich, trying out factor after factor in a standardized environment, and the line of the naturalist, psychologist and therapist, who uses the drug for

healing and enlightening, and in the process, if he is a good observer and clear thinker, discovers new facts about the psycho-physical organism.

Here, in Los Angeles, neither line of research is now being pursued. We have one or two doctors giving the stuff and compiling case histories of particular experiments, one or two working with neurotics or psychotics with the aid of the drug, and no analytical researchers. Moreover I hardly see the possibility of setting up such a group as Al now has in Vancouver—because we have no Al, nobody, that is to say, with the necessary business standing (the business man, by definition, can do nothing un-American), the necessary contacts with church and state, and the relationship with a sensitive area of science that permits him to command supplies of the drug. Again, neither Gerald [Heard] nor I can claim to be a good experimental subject For we don't have visions with the eyes closed, show no signs of psi and seem to be too much interested in the "obscure knowledge" of Suchness to want to be bothered with anything else. So it looks as though the scientific work and the therapeutic work will have to be carried on elsewhere.

Now, as to times and seasons. When does it suit you to come to Vancouver during the month of August? I can conform my plans to yours. So please let me know which date suits you best, and I will aim for that. I don't exactly know what my role in this performance will be —presumably the more or less intelligent questioner, asking the expert what it is all about.

Affectionately,
Aldous

TO VICTORIA OCAMPO 5 [SMITH 750]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal
19 July, 1956

DEAR VICTORIA,

… I am glad you liked my little book [*Heaven and Hell*]. How strange that we should all carry about with us this enormous universe of vision and that which lies beyond vision, and yet be mainly unconscious of the fact! How can we learn to pass at will from one world of consciousness to the others? Mescalin and lysergic acid will open the door; but one doesn't like to depend exclusively on these chemicals, even though they seem to be more or less completely harmless. I have taken mescalin about six times now and have been taken beyond the realm of vision to the realm of what the mystics call "obscure knowledge"—insight into the nature of things accompanied

by the realization that, in spite of pain and tragedy, the universe is all right, in other words that God is Love. The words are embarrassingly silly and, on the level of average consciousness, untrue. But when we are on the higher level, they are seen to stand for the primordial Fact, of which the consciousness is now a part. The supreme art of life would be the art of passing at will from obscure knowledge to conceptualized, utilitarian knowledge, from the aesthetic to the mystical; and all the time to be able, in the words of the Zen master, to grasp the non-particular that exists in particulars, to be aware of the not-thought which lies in thought—the absolute in relationships, the infinite in finite things, the eternal in time. The problem is how to learn that supreme art of life?

We have moved to a new house, high up in the hills and all is still confusion. Keep well, dear Victoria.

Ever yours affectionately,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [4] [SMITH 751]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
22 July, 1956

DEAR HUMPHRY,

Our letters crossed, yours being delayed at this end by the fact that we were between two houses, lving in one and getting mail at the other. I wish that our leisures might have coincided. I have none at the moment, and along with no leisure a very bad feeling about TV, particularly in relation to this field. My lunatic-fringe mail is already much more copious than I like—I had a letter a few days ago from Mauritius, from a gentleman who went out there twenty years ago to achieve enlightenment and, according to himself, has now written the most extraordinary book in the world's history, and will I please write an introduction and secure him a fellowship at the Ford Foundation's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, or failing that a job on an American newspaper! And I say nothing of the gentleman in Chicago who has discovered the Absolute Truth and sends letters and telegrams about it to President Eisenhower and Bertrand Russell; nor the Mexican dermatologist who thinks that mescalin may be good for eczema, and will I tell him where he can procure the drug, nor the young man from Yorkshire who ate a peyote button supplied by a cactus-growing friend and for three days heard all music one tone higher than it should have been (quite an interesting phenomenon, incidentally, and one which might be worth testing with musical

subjects. Laura thinks that it doesn't actually raise the pitch so far as she is concerned; merely makes it sound like music played with more than ordinary verve and perfection and energy—something which tends to make one think that the piece is being played a little sharp).

As you say in your letter, we still know very little about the psychodelics, and, until we know a good deal more, I think the matter should be discussed, and the investigations described, in the relative privacy of learned journals, the decent obscurity of moderately highbrow books and articles. Whatever one says on the air is bound to be misunderstood; for people take from the heard or printed discourse that which they are predisposed to hear or read, not what is there. All that TV can do is to increase the number of misunderstanders by many thousandfold—and at the same time to increase the range of misunderstanding by providing no objective text to which the voluntarily ignorant can be made to refer. Littera scripta manet, volat irrevocabile verbum.

In the intervals of writing articles for *Esquire* and making corrections in the play, I am doing a little work on my phantasy—writing the first chapters of the hero's childhood in an earliest Victorian setting, and ruminating the problems that will arise when he gets out to the hypothetical island in the Indian ocean, where his uncle has gone as surgeon to the local rajah (I shall make him emulate Dr. [James] Esdaile and cut off elephantiasis tumours in the mesmeric trance) and has taken to a kind of tantric philosophy and praxis, aimed at helping people to realize their potential capacities and at giving them a certain control of their destiny, primarily through control of the autonomie nervous system and the vegetative soul, plus access to the Atman-Brahman. I do hope I can bring this off with some measure of success.

Give my love to Jane and the Hubbards.

Ever yours affectionately,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 756]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
23 September, 1956

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,

Your good letter of two days ago heaped coals of fire on my head; for I have been gravely neglectful in the matter of writing. My brother has just left, after having been here, with his wife, for a fortnight; and doing things with him, along with a mass of work, kept me

exceedingly busy, so that correspondence has banked up to alarming height and threatens to engulf me completely.

While Julian was here we went to see, at UCLA, the rats and cats and monkeys with electrodes stuck into various areas of their brains. They press a little lever which gives them a short, mild electric shock —and the experience, in certain positions of the electrode, is evidently so ecstatically wonderful, that they will go on at the rate of eight thousand self-stimuli per hour until they collapse from exhaustion, lack of food and sleep. We are obviously getting very close to reproducing the Moslem paradise, where every orgasm lasts six hundred years.

Our last experiment with LSD in conjunction with hypnosis—the idea being to hypnotize the participants and give them post-hypnotic suggestions to the effect that they would be able to reproduce the LSD experience at a given word of command—was not very successful, so far as the hypnotic procedure was concerned. It may be that the suggestions, in order to be successful, have to be repeated on several occasions. Or it may be, of course, that the effects of the chemical are not reproducible by psychological means, at any rate in the majority of cases. What was interesting to me in the experiment was the fact that fifty gamma of LSD were sufficient to produce in me virtually the full effect of the standard dose, while with Laura twenty-five gamma proved to be very efficacious. It may be that preliminary hypnotism was a help in maximizing the effect of the chemical.

I had an interesting communication a few days ago from a man who used to be a trader in the jungles of the upper Amazon, at the foot of the Andes, and is now teaching art in a California high school. He gave a full account of a drug which the Indians call Ayahuasca,[6] derived from a mixture of local plants and effective only in large doses —you have to swallow a quart of an ill-tasting liquid. The result is something quite close to the peyote experience, with the visions taking predominantly vegetable, or vegetable-like forms, so that the natives use it in a kind of nature worship, combined with paranormal diagnosis and insight into curative simples. The man has asked for his paper to be returned; but I have asked him to send a copy to you, along with any botanical information he may have.

It is good news that you may be coming to California later this autumn. Laura and I will be in New York from about October 16th to November 1st (with possible absences for two or three days). I have to give a talk at the banquet of the N.Y. Academy of Sciences, who are having a meeting about tranquilizers. I shall chat about the history of tension and the methods of release devised by different cultures in the past. Is there any chance that you may be in N.Y. at that time?

The play situation is still in statu quo—de Liagre, the producer,

waiting to hear from Deborah Kerr. [….] Meanwhile I have postponed work on my phantasy to embark upon an adaptation for musical comedy of *Brave New World.* The first act is finished and seems to be very lively. After I have finished with my N.Y. Academy of Science thing, I will move on to the Savage Reservation. If all goes well and I can get somebody good to do the music—such as Leonard Bernstein—the results might be remarkable.

Love to you both.

Affectionately,
Aldous

TO MATTHEW AND ELLEN HUXLEY [7] [SMITH 757]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
30 September, 1956

… Julian and Juliette were here for two weeks and we saw the scientific sights, here, at Caltech, at La Jolla and the San Diego Zoo. In the intervals I have been working on three projects—my usual article for *Esquire,* my speech on the History of Tension for the N.Y. Academy of Sciences, and a musical comedy version of *Brave New World*—for everyone tells me that science fiction can never succeed on the stage as a straight play, but that it will be accepted when the medium ceases to be realistic and makes use of music and lyrics. I have finished the first act—completely re-writing the material produced by Mr. [——], the original adapter and still half-owner of the rights. But better half a loaf than no bread, and I hope that, if the other acts work out as satisfactorily as the first, I may have something that will get put on. I am having to depart from the book, since the story must be put over in such an abbreviated form—sixty pages of script as opposed to the standard hundred and twenty for a straight play. But the streamlining will be a dramatic improvement… .

… Here it is!

Epsilons (singing)
No more Mammy, no more Pappy:
Ain't we lucky, ain't we happy?
Everybody's oh so happy,
Everybody's happy now!

Sex galore, but no more marriages;
No more pushing baby carriages;
No one has to change a nappy—

Ain't we lucky, ain't we happy:
Everybody's happy now.

Dope for tea and dope for dinner,
Fun all night, and love and laughter;
No remorse, no morning after.
Where's the sin, and who's the sinner?
Everybody's happy now.

Girls pneumatic, girls exotic,
Girls ecstatic, girls erotic-
Hug me, Baby; make it snappy.
Everybody's oh so happy,
Everybody's happy now.

Lots to eat and hours for drinking
Soma cocktails—no more thinking.
NO MORE THINKING, NO MORE THINKING!
Everybody's happy now.

Ever your affectionate,
Aldous

TO MRS. ELLEN HUXLEY [SMITH 761]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
20 November, 1956

DEAREST ELLEN,

Thank you for your fascinating account of the mescalin experience. Humphry was here and talked a little about the event—but, I felt, with a certain reticence, as though something had happened, so far as he was concerned, which he didn't want to discuss too freely. Did you get what I have got so strongly on the recent occasions when I have taken the stuff—an overpowering sense of gratitude, a desire to give thanks to the Order of Things for the privilege of this particular experience, and also for the privilege—for that one feels it to be, in spite of everything—of living in a human body on this particular planet? And then there is the intense feeling of compassion for those who, for whatever reason, make it impossible for themselves to get anywhere near the reality revealed by the drug—the reality which is always there for those who are in the right state of mind to perceive it. Compassion for the people who are too rigidly good or too rigidly intellectual, who live in the home-made world of their own ethical

and social system, their own favourite notions of what's what; and compassion at the other end of the scale for those who blind themselves by excessive egotism, by alcohol and parties and TV. Some of the compassion and some of the gratitude remain, even after the experience is over. One can never be quite the same again… .

Your affectionate,
Aldous

TO MRS. ELLEN HUXLEY [SMITH 763]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Hollywood 28, Cal.
6 December, 1956

DEAREST ELLEN,

Thank you for your letter. Yes, how strange too is that sense of the unimportance of death, combined with the sense of the supreme importance of life. The only people who *don't* get anything from LSD or mescalin are psycho-analysts. There are 2 experimenters here who have given it to several Freudians. None of them got anything positive —except for one, who said that, when he went to the bathroom, he noticed that "his excreta smelled stronger and sweeter." Sig Freud's body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul, or his anus, goes marching along.

I am enclosing a cheque for you to get Xmas presents for all and sundry according to taste. It is much easier than sending parcels and, I hope, will work out more to everyone's satisfaction.

Much love to you all.

Your affectionate,
Aldous

Chapter 20

1956
The History of Tension

ALDOUS HUXLEY

The following address was delivered at a conference at which the majority of papers read pertained to the new tranquilizing agent meprobamate [Miltown]. It was another occasion when Huxley9s was the lone voice from the world of letters at a gathering of physicians and scientists. His monograph "is concerned with the use of certain chemical compounds that produce certain changes of consciousness and so permit a measure of self-transcendence and a temporary relief of tension" No less than seven radio and television appearances were lined up for him when he arrived in New York for the conference.

THE TITLE OF this paper is somewhat misleading for, strictly speaking, the history of tension does not exist. Tension is a form of disease; and diseases, as such, are beyond the scope of history. There is no such thing, for example, as a medieval stomach-ache, no such thing as a specifically neolithic focal infection, a characteristically Victorian neuraglia, or a New Deal epilepsy. So far as the patient is concerned, the symptoms of his illness are a completely personal experience, an experience to which the public life of nations, the events recorded in the headlines or discussed in scientific journals and literary reviews are totally irrelevant. Politics, culture, the march of civilization, all the marvels of nature, all the triumphs of art and science and technology —these things exist for the healthy, not for the sick. The sick are aware only of their private pains and miseries, only of what goes on within the four walls of the sickroom. For them the infinite universe has contracted almost to a point; nothing remains of it but their own suffering bodies, their own numbed or tormented minds. Disease as an actual experience is more or less completely independent of time and place. Consequently there cannot be a history of disease as experience; there can only be a history of medicine—that is to say, a history of theories about the nature of diseases and of the recipes employed at different times for their treatment, together with a history of the ways in which organized societies have reacted to the problems of disease within the community.

While tension, as a psychosomatic illness, has no history, at least

some of the causes of tension lie within the public domain and can be made the subject of historical study. The same is true of the procedures sanctioned by various societies for the prevention and relief of tension. The subject is enormous; my time is short and my ignorance encyclopedic. I shall therefore make no attempt to discuss all the historical factors associated with tension, but shall confine myself to those that are most manageable and, at the same time, most relevant to the problems confronting us today.

Let me start with what I shall *not* talk about. I shall not talk, except perhaps incidentally, about the historical causes of tension. This would entail a discussion of two vast and complex themes—the transformation of culture patterns and the relations subsisting between a given culture and the individuals brought up within it.

At the risk of indulging in those Original Sins of the intellect, over-simplification and overabstraction, let me sum up this entire matter in one large, comprehensive generalization. Tension, I should say, arises in persons who, because of some congenital or acquired weakness, are unable to cope with certain distressing situations. These distressing situations are produced by conflict—conflict between the fundamental drives to self-affirmation and sex on the one hand, and the equally fundamental drive to gregariousness on the other. The drive to gregariousness is canalized by society, sanctioned by tradition, and rationalized in terms of religion and philosophy; hence the intrusion of historical factors into a situation that, on the animal level, would be exclusively biological. The disease of tension seems to have arisen under all cultural conditions—in shame cultures as in guilt cultures, in primitive cultures no less than in highly developed cultures—and fundamentally similar devices for the relief of tension have been developed in all the societies of which we have any knowledge. It is with these devices for the relief of tension that I shall be concerned in this paper.

Like all other diseases, tension tends to narrow the patient's awareness until, in extreme cases, he is conscious of nothing but himself. Grave illnesses profoundly change the personality of their victims. To this changed personality the narrowing of awareness induced by the illness soon comes to seem almost normal and is taken for granted. Tension is not a severe illness, and those who suffer from tension are well enough to feel and suffer from the cramping self-centeredness imposed upon them by their psychosomatic disorder. They are like those lost souls whose punishment is, in the words of the great Catholic poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, "to be their sweating selves, but worse." The victim of tension knows and is acutely distressed by his sense of being his sweating self, but worse. And here we may remark that even healthy people are often distressed by the

realization that they are condemned to be the separated, insulated individuals they so irretrievably are. Neurotics hate being their sweating selves, but worse. Normal people hate being their sweating selves, period. One of the most disagreeable symptoms of tension is simply the normal distress at being an island universe raised, so to speak, to a higher power. Man is a self-adoring egotist, but an egotist who often feels an intense distaste for the object of his idolatrous worship. Correlated with this distaste for the beloved self, there exists in all human beings an urge to self-transcendence, a wish to escape from the prison of personality, a longing to become something other and greater than the all-too-familiar Me, a susceptibility to nostalgia for a world superior to, or at least different from, the boring or painful universe of everyday reality. The religious man has attributed this universal urge to self-transcendence to an innate and deep-seated yearning for the divine. The biologist sees the matter somewhat differently, and he attributes man's desire for self-transcendence to the workings of his innate gregariousness. The individual longs to be merged with the herd, but he is too self-centered to be able to do so completely and too self-conscious to be able to sustain the attempt for long. He is therefore condemned to live in a state of chronic dissatisfaction, constantly pining for something that, in the very nature of things, he can never have.

These two explanations are not mutually exclusive, and I should be inclined to think that both are partially correct. Be that as it may, the facts for which they profess to account are genuine facts. There *is* an urge to self-transcendence and, with it, a profound distaste for the insulated ego, a distaste which, in the victims of tension, becomes acute and agonizing. In every human culture certain procedures for achieving temporary self-transcendence, and thereby relieving tension, have been developed and systematically employed. These procedures may be classified under a few comprehensive headings. There are chemical methods, the musical and gymnastic methods, the methods that depend on the subjection of insulated individuals to the influence of crowds, the various religious methods and, finally the methods whose purpose is mystical self-transcendence—the various yogas and spiritual exercises of Oriental and Western traditions. Hours would be needed to do justice to all these stratagems, and I must limit myself to a discussion of only two of them, the most popular and the most difficult to control, namely, the chemical method and what may be called the crowd method.

This monograph is concerned with the use of certain chemical compounds that produce certain changes of consciousness and so permit a measure of self-transcendence and a temporary relief of tension. These tranquilizing drugs are merely the latest additions to a

long list of chemicals that have been used from time immemorial for changing the quality of consciousness, thus making possible some degree of self-transcendence and a temporary release from tension. Let us always remember that, while modern pharmacology has given us a host of new synthetics, it has made no basic discoveries in the field of the natural drugs; it has merely improved the methods of extraction, purification, and combination. All the naturally occurring sedatives, narcotics, euphories, hallucinogens, and excitants were discovered thousands of years ago, before the dawn of civilization. This surely is one of the strangest facts in that long catalogue of improbabilities known as human history. It is evident that primitive man experimented with every root, twig, leaf, and flower, every seed, nut, berry and fungus in his environment. Pharmacology is older than agriculture. There is good reason to believe that even in paleolithic times, while he was still a hunter and a food-gatherer, man killed his animal and human enemies with poisoned arrows. By the late Stone Age he was systematically poisoning himself. The presence of poppy heads in the kitchen middens of the Swiss Lake Dwellers shows how early in his history man discovered the techniques of self-transcendence through drugs. There were dope addicts long before there were farmers.

Here let me mention a fact of some importance. To relieve tension, a chemical compound need not have the characteristics of a tranquilizer. Alcohol, for example, is far from tranquilizing, at least in the middle stages of intoxication, and it has been relieving tension ever since Noah made his epoch-making discovery. Self-transcendence can be achieved by an excitant as well as by a narcotic or a hallucinogen. Tension is relieved not only by such contemplative drugs as opium, peyote, kava, and ayahuasca, but also by active, extraverted intoxicants such as wine, hashish, and the soma of ancient India. Physiologically and socially, some drugs are much less harmful than others, and are therefore to be preferred, although such merely utilitarian considerations have never carried much weight with the drug taker. For him anything that produces a measure of self-transcendence and release seems good. So long as it works here and now, who cares what may happen later on?

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience* William James says: “The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no; drunkenness expands, unites and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the *Yes* function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere

perversity do men run after it. To the poor and the unlettered it stands in the place of symphony concerts and of literature. It is part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something that we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only in the fleeting earlier stages of what in its totality is so degrading a poison. The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole."

Elsewhere in the *Varieties* James cites the dictum of one of his medical friends: "There is no cure for dipsomania except religiomania." In their somewhat too epigrammatic way, these words express a truth that the collective experience of Alcoholics Anonymous has amply confirmed. Mystical experience stands to drunkenness in the relation of whole to part, of health to sickness. For the alcoholic as for the mystic there is an opening of doors, a bypassing of what I have called the cerebral reducing valve, the normal brain function that limits our mental processes to an awareness, most of the time, of what is biologically useful. For both there is a glimpse of something transcendent to the world of everyday experience—that narrow, utilitarian world that our self-centered consciousness selects from out of the infinite wealth of cosmic potentialities. What the drunkard sees in the earlier phases of intoxication is immediately recognized as excellent. What is not excellent is the particular method employed for achieving this transcendental experience.

Alcohol is one of the oldest and certainly the most widely used of all consciousness-changing drugs. Unfortunately it is a rather inefficient and, at the same time, a rather dangerous drug. There are other and better ways than getting drunk for achieving the same intrinsically excellent results. Some of these ways are chemical, others are psychological. Others involve fasting, voluntary insomnia, and various forms of self-torture. All these procedures modify the normal body chemistry and so facilitate the bypassing of the cerebral reducing valve and the achievement of a temporary escape from the prison of insulated self-hood. Some day, when psychology becomes a genuine science, all these traditional methods for producing self-transcendence will be systematically examined, and their respective merits and defects will be accurately assessed. For the present we must be content with such fragmentary knowledge as is now available.

William James's characterization of alcohol as an exciter of the mystical faculties is strikingly confirmed by what the mystics themselves have said of their ecstatic experiences. In the mystical literature of Islam, metaphors derived from wine and winebibbing are constantly employed. Precisely similar metaphors are to be found in the writings of some of the greatest Christian saints. Thus St. John of

the Cross calls his soul *la interior bodega di mi Amado*—the inward wine cellar of my Beloved. And St. Teresa of Avila tells us that she "regards the center of our soul as a cellar, into which God admits us when and as it pleases Him, so as to intoxicate us with the delicious wine of His grace."

The experience of self-transcendence and the release of tension produced by alcohol and the other consciousness-changing chemicals is so wonderful, so blessed and blissful, that men have found it quite natural to identify these drugs to which they owe their momentary happiness with one or other of their gods. "Religion," said Karl Marx, "is the opium of the people." It would be at least as true to say that opium is the religion of the people. A few mystics have compared the state of ecstasy to drunkenness; but innumerable drinkers, smokers, chewers, and snuff-takers have achieved a form of ecstatic release through the use of drugs. The supernatural qualities of this mental state are projected outward upon the drugs that produced it. Thus, in Greece wine was not merely sacred to Dionysus; wine *was* Dionysus. Bacchus was called Theoinos—Godwine—a single word equating alcohol with deity, the experience of drunkenness with the holy spirit. "Born a god," said Euripides, "Bacchus is poured out in libations to the gods, and through him men receive good." That good, according to the Greeks, was of many kinds—physical health, mental illumination, the gift of prophesying, the ecstatic sense of being one with divine truth. Similarly, in ancient India, the juice of the soma plant (whatever that plant may have been) was not merely sacred to Indra, the hero-god of battles; it *was* Indra. And at the same time it was Indra's *alter ego,* a god in its own right. Many similar examples of this identification of a consciousness-changing drug with some god of the local pantheon could be cited. In Siberia and Central America various species of hallucinogenic mushrooms are regarded as gods. The Indians of the southwestern United States identified the peyote cactus with native deities and, in recent years, with the Holy Ghost of Christian theology. In classical times the northern barbarians who drank malt liquor worshiped their beer under the name of Sabazius. Beer was also a god for the Celtic peoples, as mead seemed divine to the Scandinavians and the Teutons. In Anglo-Saxon, the idea of catastrophe, of panic, of the ultimate in horror and disaster is conveyed by a word whose literal meaning is "the deprivation of mead." Almost everywhere the consumption of consciousness-changing drugs has been associated, at one time or another, with religious ritual. Drinking, chewing, inhaling, and snuff-taking have been regarded as sacramental acts, sanctioned by tradition and rationalized in terms of the prevailing theology. In the Moslem world alcohol was forbidden, but the urge to self-transcendence could not be

suppressed, and there were and still are places within the Moslem world where the consumption of *Cannabis indica* is not only sanctioned by society, but has even been turned into a kind of religious rite. Certain Mohammedan authors have seen in hashish the equivalent of the sacramental bread and wine of the Christians. Among the Jews many efforts were made to give a religious sanction to winebibbing. Jeremiah refers to the "cup of consolation," which was administered to the bereaved. Amos speaks of men who drink wine in the house of their God. Micah has some harsh words for those who, in his day, used to prophesy under the influence of alcohol. Isaiah denounces the priests and prophets who have "erred through strong drink." They have erred, he says, "in vision." Traditionally, Dionysus was the god of prophecy and inspiration; but alas, the revelations of alcohol are not altogether reliable.

From self-transcendence by chemical means we now pass to self-transcendence by social means. The individual makes direct contact with society in two ways—as a member of some familial, professional, or religious group, or as a member of a crowd. A group is purposive and structured; a crowd is chaotic, serves no particular purpose, and is capable of anything except intelligent action. Using an analogy that is not too misleading, we can say that the first is an organ of the body politic, the second is a kind of tumor, generally benign, but sometimes horribly malignant. The greater part of most people's lives is passed in groups. Participation in crowd activities is a relatively rare event. This is fortunate, for individuals in a crowd are different from, and in every respect worse than, individuals in isolation or within purposive and organized groups. A man in a crowd loses his personal identity, and that, of course, is why he likes to be in a crowd. Personal identity is what he longs to transcend, what he desires to escape. Unfortunately, the members of a crowd lose more than their personal identity; they also lose their powers of reasoning and their capacity for moral choice. Their suggestibility is increased to the point where they cease to have any judgment or will of their own. They become very excitable, lose all sense of individual or collective responsibility, are subject to sudden and violent accesses of rage, enthusiasm, and panic, and become capable of performing the most monstrous, the most completely senseless acts of violence—usually against others, but sometimes against themselves. In a word, a man in a crowd behaves as though he had swallowed a large dose of some powerful intoxicant. He is a victim of what may be called herd poisoning. Like alcohol, herd poison is an active, extraverted drug. It changes the quality of individual consciousness in the direction of frenzy, and makes possible a high degree of downward self-transcendence. The crowd-intoxicated individual escapes from insulated selfhood into a kind of subhuman

mindlessness.

From the beginning men have done their work and gone through the serious business of living in purposeful groups. Crowds have provided them with their psychological vacations. Nourishment drawn from the group has been their staple food; herd poison has been their delicious dope. Religion has everywhere sanctioned and rationalized intoxication by herd poison, just as it has sanctioned and rationalized the use of consciousness-changing chemicals. Alfred North Whitehead's statement that "religion is what the individual does with his solitariness" is true only if we choose to define religion as something that, as a matter of historical fact, it has never been, except for a small minority. And the same would be true of a definition of religion in terms of what the individual does with his experience of being in a small, dedicated group such as the Quaker Meeting or the "two or three gathered together in my name," of whom Christ spoke in the gospel. The spirituality of small groups is a very high form of religion, but it is not the only or the commonest form—it is merely the best. Significantly enough, Christ promised to be in the midst of a group of two or three. He never promised to be present in a crowd. Where two or three thousand, or two or three tens of thousands are gathered together, the indwelling presence is generally of a very different and un-Christlike kind. Yet such crowd activities as the mass revival meeting and the pilgrimage are sanctioned and even actively encouraged by religious leaders today just as they were in the pagan past. The reason is simple. Most people find it easier to achieve self-transcendence and relief from tension in a crowd than in a small group or when they are by themselves. These herd poisonings in the name of religion are not particularly beneficial; they merely provide brief holidays from insulated self-consciousness.

The history of man's efforts to find self-transcendence in crowds is long and, for all its strangeness, its weird aberrations, profoundly monotonous. From the potlatch and the corroboree to the latest outburst of "rock 'n roll," the manifestations of herd poisoning exhibit the same subhuman characteristics. At their best, such performances are merely grotesque in their subhumanity; at their worst, they are both grotesque and horrible. One thinks, for example, of the festivals of the Syrian goddess, in the course of which, under the maddening influence of herd poison and priestly suggestion, men castrated themselves and women lacerated their breasts. One thinks of Greek maenadism, with its savage dismemberment of living victims. One thinks of the Roman saturnalia. One thinks of all the outbursts of crowd intoxication during the Middle Ages—the children's crusades, the periodical orgies of collective flagellation, and those strange dancing manias in which self-transcendence through herd poisoning

was combined with self-transcendence by gymnastic means and self-transcendence through repetitive music. One thinks of the wild religious revivals, the frantic stampedes of those who believed that the end of the world was at hand, the frenzies of iconoclasm in the name of God, of senseless destruction for righteousness' sake. These are bad enough, but there is something much worse—the crowd intoxication that is exploited by the ambitious rabble-rouser for his own political or religious ends.

In the spring of 1954, while I was staying at Ismailia on the Suez Canal, I was taken by my hosts to the local movie theater. The film, which was drawing record crowds, was *Julius Caesar* played in English, but with Arabic subtitles. The spectators sat in spellbound attention, their eyes riveted on the screen. Why on earth, I kept wondering, should twentieth-century Arabs be so passionately interested in a sixteenth-century Englishman's account of events that had taken place at Rome in the first century B.C.? And suddenly it was obvious. Caesar, Brutus, Antony, all those upper-class politicians fighting for power and, in the process, cynically flattering and exploiting a proletarian mob they despised but could not do without, were thoroughly familiar and contemporary figures to the Egyptian audience. What had happened in Rome just before and after Caesar's murder was very like what had been happening only a few weeks before in Cairo when Naguib fell, rose again, in triumph, and was once more brought low by a rival who knew how to play on the passions of the crowd, how to make use of its drunken enthusiasm and drunken violence for his own purposes. Looking at Shakespeare's play, the moviegoers of Ismailia found themselves looking at an uncensored report on the latest *coup d'etat.*

Of course, the greatest virtuoso in the art of exploiting the symptoms of herd poisoning was Adolf Hitler. The Nazis did their work with scientific thoroughness. All the resources of modern technology were mobilized in order to reduce the greatest possible number of people to the lowest possible state of downward self-transcendence. Phonographs repeated slogans. Loudspeakers poured forth the brassy and strongly accented music, the repetition of which drives people out of their minds. Concealed sound machines produced subsonic vibrations at the critical, soul-stirring rate of fourteen cycles per second. Modern methods of transportation were used to assemble thousands of the faithful under the floodlights in enormous stadiums, and the voice of the arch-hypnotist was broadcast by radio to millions more.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive" So wrote Wordsworth of his experience of herd poisoning in the first, joyful months of the French Revolution. In our own time, millions of men and women, millions of

enthusiastic boys and girls have had a similar experience. For the herd-poisoned members of the mobs that are used for the making of revolutions and the buttressing of dictatorial power, the dawn even of Nazism, even of Communism, seems blissful. Unfortunately, dawns are succeeded by laborious and often unpleasant days and evenings. In those later hours of revolutionary history, bliss is apt to be conspicuous by its absence. At the moment of sunrise, however, nobody ever thinks of what is likely to happen in the afternoon. Like alcoholics or morphine addicts, the victims of herd poison are interested only in releasing self-transcendence here and now. “After me the deluge,” is their motto. And sure enough, the deluge punctually arrives.

From the history of tension let us turn, in conclusion, to the present and the future. It is clear, I think, that the problem of tension will be completely solved only when we have a perfect society—that is to say, never. Meanwhile, it always remains possible to find partial solutions and temporary palliatives. Let us consider a few practical steps that it would be fairly easy to take.

First of all we might incorporate into our present profoundly unsatisfactory and disappointing system of education a few simple courses in the art of controlling the autonomie nervous system and the subconcious mind. As things now stand, we teach children the principles of good health, good morals, and good thinking, but we do not teach them how to act upon these principles. We urge them to make good resolutions, but we do nothing whatever to help them carry these resolutions into practice. A main source of tension is the consciousness of miserably failing to do what we know we ought to do. If every child were given some training in what Hornell Hart has called autoconditioning, we should do more for general decency and good feeling than all the sermons ever preached.

The next step to be taken is prophylactic in character. Human beings pine for self-transcendence, and getting drunk on herd poison is one of the most effective methods of taking a holiday from insulated selfhood and the burdens of responsibility. So long as they indulge in crowd-intoxication at football games and carnivals, at revival meetings and the rallies of democratically organized political parties, no harm is done. We must never forget, however, that the spellbinders, the rabble-rousers, the potential Hitlers are always with us. We must never forget that it is very easy for such men to turn an innocent orgy into an instrument of destruction, into a savage, mindless force directed toward the overthrow of liberty. To prevent them from exploiting crowd intoxication for their own sinister purposes we must be perpetually on our guard. Whether a world inhabited by potential Hitlers on the one hand and potential herd-

poison addicts on the other can ever be made completely safe for rationality and decency seems doubtful, but at least we can try to make it a little safer than it is at present. For example, we can give our children lessons in the elements of general semantics. We can tell them about the frightful dangers of intellectual sin. We can make their flesh creep by reciting to them the disastrous consequences to societies and to individuals of the rabble-rouser's oversimplification, overgeneralization, and overabstraction. We can remind them to live in present time and to think concretely and realistically, in terms of observable fact. We can unveil the absurd and discreditable secrets of propaganda and illustrate our lectures with examples drawn from the history of politics, religion, and the advertising industry. Would such a training be effective? Perhaps—or perhaps not. Herd poison is a very powerful intoxicant. Once they get into a crowd, even upright and sensible men are apt to lose their reason and accept all the suggestions, however nonsensical or however immoral, that may be given them. All we can hope to accomplish is to make it more difficult for the rabble-rouser to do his nefarious work.

The third step we must take will, in fact, be taken whether we like it or not. Once the seeds of a science have been planted they tend to sprout and develop autonomously according to the law of their own being, not according to the laws of *our* being. Pharmacology has now entered upon a period of rapid growth, and it seems quite certain that in the next few years scores of new methods for changing the quality of consciousness will be discovered. So far as the individual human being is concerned, these discoveries will be more important, more genuinely revolutionary, than the recent discoveries in the field of nuclear physics and their application to peacetime uses. If it does not destroy us, nuclear energy will merely give us more of what wc have already—cheap power, with its corollary of more gadgets, larger irrigation projects, and more efficient transportation. It will give us these things at a very high price—an increase in the amount of noxious radiation, with its corollaries of harmful mutations and a permanent fouling of man's genetic pool. But the pharmacologists will give us something that most human beings have never had before. If we want joy, peace, and loving kindness, they will give us loving kindness, peace, and joy. If we want beauty, they will transfigure the outside world for us and open the door to visions of unimaginable richness and significance. If our desire is for life everlasting, they will give us the next best thing—aeons of blissful experience miraculously telescoped into a single hour. They will bestow these gifts without exacting the terrible price that, in the past, men had to pay for resorting too frequently to such consciousness-changing drugs as heroin or cocaine, or even that good old stand-by alcohol. Already we

have at our disposal hallucinogens and tranquilizers whose physiological price is amazingly low, and there seems to be every reason to believe that the consciousness-changers and tension-relievers of the future will do their work even more efficiently and at even lower cost to the individual. Human beings will be able to achieve effortlessly what in the past could be only achieved with difficulty, by means of self-control and spiritual exercises. Will this be a good thing for individuals and for societies? Or will it be a bad thing? These are questions to which I do not know the answers. Nor, may I add, does anyone else. The outlines of these answers may begin to appear a generation from now. Meanwhile, all that one can predict with any degree of certainty is that it will be necessary to reconsider and re-evaluate many of our traditional notions about ethics and religion, and many of our current views about the nature of the mind, in the context of the pharmacological revolution. It will be extremely disturbing; but it will also be enormous fun.

Chapter 21

1957
Letters

Huxley divided this year between his Los Angeles home and a New York City hotel where he worked on the script for the stage version of The Genius and the Goddess, *and the musical comedy version of* Brave New World. *By the end of the year he had commenced writing* Brave New World Revisited *(a full-length book not to be confused with the* Esquire *article). He took no psychedelic substances in* 1957, *but did take large doses of niacin-amide under the supervision of Dr. Hoffer in an attempt to reduce the cholesterol level of his blood and thus effect the diminishing of his right eye cataract. Huxley's letters this year continued to evidence his concern with the transcendent nature of visionary experiences produced by psychoactive substances, including light doses of ether and laughing gas, and the value of mescalin in hypnosis and ESP research, based upon preliminary investigation.*

TO PHILIP B. SMITH [1]

3276 Deronda Drive
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
20 May, 1957

… It Seems Evident that anaesthetics, like mescalin and LSD, "open a door," which gives access to areas of the mind, of which ordinarily we have no, or very little, or only occasional cognizance. In this area of the mind we may find visionary experience, sometimes terrible, but more often (if we are physically and psychologically healthy) beautiful and illuminating. We may also find what the mystics call "obscure knowledge" about the nature of the universe—a "sense of something far more deeply interfused" (in Wordsworth's phrase), a sense that All is present in every particular, the Absolute in every relative. And associated with this obscure knowledge may come a new mode of apprehension, in which the ordinary subject-object relationship is somehow transcended, and there is an awareness of self and the outer world as being one. Often, too, there is an actual experience of truths

(they are *known* to be truths), which, when presented in conceptual terms to the mind in its normal state, seem incomprehensible and absurd. Such propositions as "God is love" are realized with the totality of one's being, and their truth seems self-evident in spite of pain and death. With this goes an intense gratitude for the privilege of existence in this universe. (Blake said that "gratitude is heaven itself—a phrase I was unable to understand before taking LSD, but which now seems luminously comprehensible.) Different drugs give access to different areas of this Other World of the mind—or at least make it easier to go to one area rather than another. It is surprising, however, to see how closely the experiences induced by very different chemicals correspond with one another. Mescalin is unlike LSD, and both are unlike the active substance in the mushrooms described by Gordon Wasson. But the experiences induced are very similar. And, in their turn, these drug induced experiences are very similar to the experiences which come to certain people spontaneously and which others have induced by "spiritual exercises" and such psycho-physical methods for changing body chemistry as fasting, prolonged insomnia, violent mortification of the flesh. Nor should we forget the effects of "limited environment." What men like Hebb and Lilly are doing in the laboratory was done by the Christian hermits in the Thebaid and elsewhere, and by Hindu and Tibetan hermits in the remote fastnesses of the Himalayas. My own belief is that these experiences really tell us something about the nature of the universe, that they are valuable in themselves and, above all, valuable when incorporated into our world-picture and acted upon [in] normal life. The effect of the mystical experience upon normal life has everywhere been regarded as the test of the experience's validity.

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 774]

3276 Deronda Drive
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
1 June, 1957

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… Meanwhile what do you say to Eileen's plan (about which she said she was writing to you) for a quiet series of experiments in Mrs. Bolton's house in Florida next winter? It sounds to me very good, and if you could get away for at least some of the duration of the experiments, it should be possible to achieve something significant. Using the same subjects in a regular series of tests should make possible a really systematic exploration of their other world. It will also be possible to see what can be done by combining hypnosis with

LSD or mescalin. Dr. L. J. West, of the Medical School of the University of Oklahoma, was here a few weeks ago—an extremely able young man, I think. His findings are that mescalinized subjects are almost unhypnotizable. I suggested to him that he should hypnotize his people before they took LSD and should give them post-hypnotic suggestions aimed at orientating the drug-induced experience in some desired direction, and also at the very desirable goal of enabling subjects to recapture the LSD experience by purely psychological means, after their return to normal consciousness, and whenever they so desired. The fact that this kind of experience occurs in some persons spontaneously indicates that chemicals are not indispensable, and it may be that the unconscious can be persuaded, by means of post-hypnotic suggestions, repeated if necessary again and again, to open the door without the aid of chemical keys. Such a set-up as Eileen envisages would be ideal for this kind of experiment. It would be a great thing if you could get down to Florida to supervise at least the initial phases of the work.

I had a letter a few days since from another doctor in Oklahoma, Dr. Philip Smith, who has been experimenting with anaesthetics such as ether, laughing gas, etc.—testing the psychological effects of light doses. He has evidently had good results himself and he wrote to me asking if I knew any literary references to the matter. I know very few, and he said there were remarkably few in the medical literature. It is evident from the little there is that here is vet another key to the door into the other world.

While I was in New York, I lunched with Wasson at his Temple of Mammon. [….] he has put an immense amount of work into his subject, and the material brought together in his vast tomes is very curious and suggestive. However, he does, as you say, like to think that his mushrooms are somehow unique and infinitely superior to everything else. I tried to disabuse him. But he likes to feel that he has got hold of the One and Only psychodelic—accept no substitutes, none genuine unless sold with the signature of the inventor.

I also saw dear old Suzuki in New York. What a really wonderful old man! Have you read his most recent book on *Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist?* It is very good. And even better is a little pamphlet published by the London Buddhist Society, called the *Essence of Buddhism.* This last is really admirable. It makes one realize how much subtler these Far Eastern Buddhists were, in matters of psychology, than anyone in the West. They know all about “existential experiences” and the horrors of the human situation as described by Sartre, Camus and the rest—and they know how to come through to the other side, where every relative manifests absolute Suchness, and where Suchness is identical with mahakaruna, the Great

Compassion… .

Yours affectionately,
Aldous

TO J. B. RHINE [SMITH 777]

The Shoreham,
New York 19, N.Y.
19 September, 1957

DEAR JB,

Thank you for your letters of August 15th, which finds me in New York, wrestling with the preliminaries to the production of a play.

The only information about the effects of LSD on ESP comes from my friend Dr. Humphry Osmond, who found that there seemed to be telepathic rapport between himself and another man, while both were under the influence of the drug. They didn't do any systematic tests, however. And the trouble here is that people under LSD or mescalin are generally in a state of intenser, more significant experience—a state in which they are apt to become extremely impatient with the learned foolery of statistics, repeated experiments, scientific precautions, questions by investigators etc. It is rather like asking somebody who is listening with rapt attention to a Bach Prelude and Fugue, or is in the midst of making love, to answer a questionnaire. Human beings, as you have certainly found, are not very good guinea pigs, except on the more rudimentary levels of their vital activity.

Yours sincerely,
Aldous H.

Chapter 22

1958
Chemical Persuasion
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Brave New World Revisited *is based upon a series of articles originally published in early* 1958 *as a supplement to* Newsday *In a letter to his brother Julian, Aldous describes the subject—contemporary evidence for the fulfilment of his* 1932 *prophecy of mind-control under a totalitarian state through the use of drugs and other means—as "curious and depressing." In the following chapter from the book Huxley elucidates the distinction between the soma of the ancient Aryan invaders of India and the soma of Brave* New World, *which had "none of the drawbacks of the Indian original" and was "one of the most powerful instruments of rule in the dictator's armory." He provides an excellent run-down of psychoactive drugs and their potentiality for good and for harm. In passing he shows a familiarity with the findings of the La-Guardia Report, published in 1944 but suppressed for its conclusions that marijuana posed no grave dangers to society (there is no evidence that Huxley tried marijuana).*

IN THE BRAVE NEW WORLD of my fable there was no whisky, no tobacco, no illicit heroin, no bootlegged cocaine. People neither smoked, nor drank, nor sniffed, nor gave themselves injections. Whenever anyone felt depressed or below par, he would swallow a tablet or two of a chemical compound called soma. The original soma, from which I took the name of this hypothetical drug, was an unknown plant (possibly *Asclepias acida)* used by the ancient Aryan invaders of India in one of the most solemn of their religious rites. The intoxicating juice expressed from the stems of this plant was drunk by the priests and nobles in the course of an elaborate ceremony. In the Vedic hymns we are told that the drinkers of soma were blessed in many ways. Their bodies were strengthened, their hearts were filled with courage, joy and enthusiasm, their minds were enlightened and in an immediate experience of eternal life they received the assurance of their immortality. But the sacred juice had its drawbacks. Soma was a dangerous drug—so dangerous that even the great sky-god, Indra, was sometimes made ill by drinking it. Ordinary mortals might even die of an overdose. But the experience was so transcendently blissful and

enlightening that soma drinking was regarded as a high privilege. For this privilege no price was too great.

The soma of *Brave New World* had none of the drawbacks of its Indian original. In small doses it brought a sense of bliss, in larger doses it made you see visions and, if you took three tablets, you would sink in a few minutes into refreshing sleep. And all at no physiological or mental cost. The Brave New Worlders could take holidays from their black moods, or from the familiar annoyances of everyday life, without sacrificing their health or permanently reducing their efficiency.

In the Brave New World the soma habit was not a private vice; it was a political institution, it was the very essence of the Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. But this most precious of the subjects' inalienable privileges was at the same time one of the most powerful instruments of rule in the dictator's armory. The systematic drugging of individuals for the benefit of the State (and incidentally, of course, for their own delight) was a main plank in the policy of the World Controllers. The daily soma ration was an insurance against personal maladjustment, social unrest and the spread of subversive ideas. Religion, Karl Marx declared, is the opium of the people. In the Brave New World this situation was reversed. Opium, or rather soma, was the people's religion. Like religion, the drug had power to console and compensate, it called up visions of another, better world, it offered hope, strengthened faith and promoted charity. Beer, a poet has written,

> *… does more than Milton can*
> *To justify God's ways to man.*

And let us remember that, compared with soma, beer is a drug of the crudest and most unreliable kind. In this matter of justifying God's ways to man, soma is to alcohol as alcohol is to the theological arguments of Milton.

In 1931, when I was writing about the imaginary synthetic by means of which future generations would be made both happy and docile, the well-known American biochemist, Dr. Irvine Page, was preparing to leave Germany, where he had spent the three preceding years at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, working on the chemistry of the brain. "It is hard to understand," Dr. Page has written in a recent article, "why it took so long for scientists to get around to investigating the chemical reactions in their own brains. I speak," he adds, "from acute personal experience. When I came home in 1931 … I could not get a job in this field (the field of brain chemistry) or stir a ripple of interest in it." Today, twenty-seven years later, the non-

existent ripple of 1931 has become a tidal wave of biochemical and psychopharmacological research. The enzymes which regulate the workings of the brain are being studied. Within the body, hitherto unknown chemical substances such as adrenochrome and serotonin (of which Dr. Page was a co-discoverer) have been isolated and their far-reaching effects on our mental and physical functions are now being investigated. Meanwhile new drugs are being synthesized—drugs that reinforce or correct or interfere with the actions of the various chemicals, by means of which the nervous system performs its daily and hourly miracles as the controller of the body, the instrument and mediator of consciousness. From our present point of view, the most interesting fact about these new drugs is that they temporarily alter the chemistry of the brain and the associated state of the mind without doing any permanent damage to the organism as a whole. In this respect they are like soma—and profoundly unlike the mind-changing drugs of the past. For example, the classical tranquillizer is opium. But opium is a dangerous drug which, from neolithic times down to the present day, has been making addicts and ruining health. The same is true of the classical euphoric, alcohol—the drug which, in the words of the Psalmist, "maketh glad the heart of man." But unfortunately alcohol not only maketh glad the heart of man; it also, in excessive doses, causes illness and addiction, and has been a main source, for the last eight or ten thousand years, of crime, domestic unhappiness, moral degradation and avoidable accidents.

Among the classical stimulants, tea, coffee and maté are, thank goodness, almost completely harmless. They are also very weak stimulants. Unlike these "cups that cheer but not inebriate," cocaine is a very powerful and a very dangerous drug. Those who make use of it must pay for their ecstasies, their sense of unlimited physical and mental power, by spells of agonizing depression, by such horrible physical symptoms as the sensation of being infested by myriads of crawling insects and by paranoid delusions that may lead to crimes of violence. Another stimulant of more recent vintage is amphetamine, better known under its trade name of Benzedrine. Amphetamine works very effectively—but works, if abused, at the expense of mental and physical health. It has been reported that, in Japan, there are now about one million amphetamine addicts.

Of the classical vision-producers the best known are the peyote of Mexico and the southwestern United States and *Cannabis sativa,* consumed all over the world under such names as hashish, bhang, kif and marijuana. According to the best medical and anthropological evidence, peyote is far less harmful than the White Man's gin or whisky. It permits the Indians who use it in their religious rites to enter paradise, and to feel at one with the beloved community,

without making them pay for the privilege by anything worse than the ordeal of having to chew on something with a revolting flavor and of feeling somewhat nauseated for an hour or two. *Cannabis sativa* is a less innocuous drug—though not nearly so harmful as the sensation-mongers would have us believe. The Medical Committee, appointed in 1944 by the Mayor of New York to investigate the problem of marijuana, came to the conclusion, after careful investigation, that *Cannabis sativa* is not a serious menace to society, or even to those who indulge in it. It is merely a nuisance.

From these classical mind-changers we pass to the latest products of psychopharmacological research. Most highly publicized of these are the three new tranquillizers, reserpine, chlorpromazine and meprobamate. Administered to certain classes of psychotics, the first two have proved to be remarkably effective, not in curing mental illnesses, but at least in temporarily abolishing their more distressing symptoms. Meprobamate (alias Miltown) produces similar effects in person suffering from various forms of neurosis. None of these drugs is perfectly harmless; but their cost, in terms of physical health and mental efficiency, is extraordinarily low. In a world where nobody gets anything for nothing tranquillizers offer a great deal for very little. Miltown and chlorpromazine are not yet soma; but they come fairly near to being one of the aspects of that mythical drug. They provide temporary relief from nervous tension without, in the great majority of cases, inflicting permanent organic harm, and without causing more than a rather slight impairment, while the drug is working, of intellectual and physical efficiency. Except as narcotics, they are probably to be preferred to the barbiturates, which blunt the mind's cutting edge and, in large doses, cause a number of undesirable psychophysical symptoms and may result in a full-blown addiction.

In LSD-25 (lysergic acid diethylamide) the pharmacologists have recently created another aspect of soma—a perception-improver and vision-producer that is, physiologically speaking, almost costless. This extraordinary drug, which is effective in doses as small as fifty or even twenty-five millionths of a gram, has power (like peyote) to transport people into the other world. In the majority of cases, the other world to which LSD-25 gives access is heavenly; alternatively it may be purgatorial or even infernal. But, positive or negative, the lysergic acid experience is felt by almost everyone who undergoes it to be profoundly significant and enlightening. In any event, the fact that minds can be changed so radically at so little cost to the body is altogether astonishing.

Soma was not only a vision-producer and a tranquillizer; it was also (and no doubt impossibly) a stimulant of mind and body, a creator of active euphoria as well as of the negative happiness that follows the

release from anxiety and tension.

The ideal stimulant—powerful but innocuous—still awaits discover. Amphetamine, as we have seen, was far from satisfactory; it exacted too high a price for what it gave. A more promising candidate for the role of soma in its third aspect is Iproniazid, which is now being used to lift depressed patients out of their misery, to enliven the apathetic and in general to increase the amount of available psychic energy. Still more promising, according to a distinguished pharmacologist of my acquaintance, is a new compound, still in the testing stage, to be known as Deaner. Deaner is an amino-alcohol and is thought to increase the production of acetyl-choline within the body, and thereby to increase the activity and effectiveness of the nervous system. The man who takes the new pill needs less sleep, feels more alert and cheerful, thinks faster and better—and all at next to no organic cost, at any rate in the short run. It sounds almost too good to be true.

We see then that, though soma does not yet exist (and will probably never exist), fairly good substitutes for the various aspects of soma have already been discovered. There are now physiologically cheap tranquillizers, physiologically cheap vision-producers and physiologically cheap stimulants.

That a dictator could, if he so desired, make use of these drugs for political purposes is obvious. He could ensure himself against political unrest by changing the chemistry of his subjects' brains and so making them content with their servile condition. He could use tranquillizers to calm the excited, stimulants to arouse enthusiasm in the indifferent, hallucinants to distract the attention of the wretched from their miseries. But how, it may be asked, will the dictator get his subjects to take the pills that will make them think, feel and behave in the ways he finds desirable? In all probability it will be enough merely to make the pills available. Today alcohol and tobacco are available, and people spend considerably more on these very unsatisfactory euphories, pseudostimulants and sedatives than they are ready to spend on the education of their children. Or consider the barbiturates and the tranquillizers. In the United States these drugs can be obtained only on a doctor's prescription. But the demand of the American public for something that will make life in an urban-industrial environment a little more tolerable is so great that doctors are now writing prescriptions for the various tranquillizers at the rate of forty-eight millions a year. Moreover, a majority of these prescriptions are refilled. A hundred doses of happiness are not enough: send to the drugstore for another bottle—and, when that is finished, for another… . There can be no doubt that, if tranquillizers could be bought as easily and cheaply as aspirin, they would be consumed, not by the billions, as they are at present, but by the scores

and hundreds of billions. And a good, cheap stimulant would be almost as popular.

Under a dictatorship pharmacists would be instructed to change their tune with every change of circumstances. In times of national crisis it would be their business to push the sale of stimulants. Between crises, too much alertness and energy on the part of his subjects might prove embarrassing to the tyrant. At such times the masses would be urged to buy tranquillizers and vision-producers. Under the influence of these soothing syrups they could be relied upon to give their master no trouble.

As things now stand, the tranquillizers may prevent some people from giving enough trouble, not only to their rulers, but even to themselves. Too much tension is a disease; but so is too little. There are certain occasions when we *ought* to be tense, when an excess of tranquillity (and especially of tranquillity imposed from the outside, by a chemical) is entirely inappropriate.

At a recent symposium on meprobamate, in which I was a participant, an eminent biochemist playfully suggested that the United States government should make a free gift to the Soviet people of fifty billion doses of this most popular of the tranquillizers. The joke had a serious point to it. In a contest between two populations, one of which is being constantly stimulated by threats and promises, constantly directed by one-pointed propaganda, while the other is no less constantly being distracted by television and tranquillized by Miltown, which of the opponents is more likely to come out on top?

As well as tranquillizing, hallucinating and stimulating, the soma of my fable had the power of heightening suggestibility, and so could be used to reinforce the effects of governmental propaganda. Less effectively and at a higher physiological cost, several drugs already in the pharmacopoeia can be used for the same purpose. There is scopolamine, for example, the active principle of henbane and, in large doses, a powerful poison; there are pentothal and sodium amytal. Nicknamed for some odd reason “the truth serum,” penthothal has been used by the police of various countries for the purpose of extracting confessions from (or perhaps suggesting confessions to) reluctant criminals. Pentothal and sodium amytal lower the barrier between the conscious and the subconscious mind and are of great value in the treatment of “battle fatigue” by the process known in England as “abreaction therapy,” in America as “narcosynthesis.” It is said that these drugs are sometimes employed by the Communists, when preparing important prisoners for their public appearance in court.

Meanwhile pharmacology, biochemistry and neurology are on the march, and we can be quite certain that, in the course of the next few

years, new and better chemical methods for increasing suggestibility and lowering psychological resistance will be discovered. Like everything else, these discoveries may be used well or badly. They may help the psychiatrist in his battle against mental illness, or they may help the dictator in his battle against freedom. More probably (since science is divinely impartial) they will both enslave and make free, heal and at the same time destroy.

Chapter 23

1958
Letters

Huxley traveled and lectured abroad in 1958. *Dr. Albert Hofmann, discoverer of LSD in 1943, had just succeeded in isolating and identifying the active principle, psilocybin, in the sacred mushroom of Mexico, formally introduced to Western culture by* R. G. *Wasson and Prof. Roger Heim; his research interested Huxley in this new door to the Other World. In letters to Osmond, Huxley expressed his interest in a variety of experiments: LSD and hypnosis, psychedelics given to artists and to non-visualizers, and—prophetically in view of his own situation five years later-giving LSD to terminal cancer patients. He also posited a series of guidelines for psychedelic sessions, and reviewed literary classics in the light of the transcendent state. In his writing he turned back to his novel, "a kind of reverse* Brave New World" *which he called his "Topian phantasy"*

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 787]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
11 January, [1958]

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… As for the guide for persons taking mescalin or LSD-25—I have been too busy to work this out, but will try to do so before too long. I think the best way of doing the job would be to ask a series of questions. For example, "Do you now understand what Blake meant when he said, 'Gratitude is heaven itself," "Eckhart defined God in operational terms as, 'The denial of all denials.' What is your feeling about this?" "What does the word 'isness' mean to you as you look at the world around you?" "Samsara and Nirvana are one—the Absolute is present in every relative and particular event. Eternity manifests itself in every moment of time. How do you feel about these paradoxes?" "In spite of all appearances to the contrary, God is love and things are somehow all right. What about it?" "Cleave the wood and you will find me, lift the stone and I am there." "What a miracle this is! Drawing water and chopping wood." "The meanest flea as it is

in God is superior to the highest angel as he is in himself." It would be possible to put together several dozens of such short questions and statements, to be submitted to the subject in the course of his experience. If he set his mind to them, they might act as Zen koans and cause sudden openings into hitherto unglimpsed regions. It is certainly worth trying. If you think this approach is sound, I will go ahead with the plan.

Let me hear what you feel about the Commission and the advisability of a change in the present set up.

Yours,
Aldous

P.S. How well I understand what you say about writing! It seems so easy and it is so difficult. And, over and above the normal difficulties, I have to wrestle with the problem of not seeing properly—which makes all research and consulting of notes an enormous burden. Which is all, no doubt, ultimately All Right—but proximately pretty fatiguing!

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 788]

3276 Deronda Dr.,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
2 February, 1958

DEAR HUMPHRY,

We had dinner yesterday evening with [—], and I found him, I must say, extremely genial and less extravagant than formerly; so please ignore what I wrote in my last letter about him. At the same time I still have doubts about the general validity of his methods. The specifically ritual approach may be all right in some cases, but it certainly won't do in all cases. Moreover both Laura and I felt, while we listened to [—]'s account of what he does, that he gives, knowingly or unknowingly, altogether too much suggestion. Again, this may be all right in some cases—but decidedly not in all. Something more permissive should be the general rule, I feel. As for the projected meeting [—] tells me that he doesn't see much point in it. Gerald won't be available during February. Sidney Cohen[1] doesn't object, but feels no very great enthusiasm. As for myself, I don't really know. I am any how merely a spectator, not a worker in the field, and can only make suggestions from the outside and on theoretical grounds—as I did in regard to giving post-hypnotic suggestions to the effect that LSD experiences be revived by purely psychological means and at will (a suggestion, incidentally, which I have been making to all and sundry for the last three years, and which nobody, to my

knowledge, has yet acted upon—though everyone says, "How interesting!") If we have a meeting of this highly Pickwickian organization, what (outside the pleasure and interest of meeting a number of intelligent people inter ested in the same sort of thing) will be gained? Probably it would be worth meeting for the meeting's sake. Would there be ulterior advantages? [—] tells me you think of setting up a Headquarters some where. But this means money, a secretary, a director. Couldn't the same results be attained more simply and cheaply by discussing matters at a meeting, or by correspondence, and dividing up the work among the various experimenters? Sid Cohen has an interesting project which he hopes to get financed—a project that would test the efficacy of graded doses of LSD in affecting the performance of a group of professional artists. Another important project would be to give the drug to a group carefully selected to include representatives of the Sheldonian extremes and of the commoner specimens in the middle. Yet another project should be to find out whether people belonging to Galton's non-visualizing variety of human beings ever see visions under average doses of LSD, whether they can be made to see visions by large doses, and whether (as [—] insists they can) be made to see visions by suitable suggestions. Yet another project—the administration of LSD to terminal cancer cases, in the hope that it would make dying a more spiritual, less strictly physiological process. I have been asked by the *Saturday Evening Post* to do a piece on the ethical, religious and social implications of psychopharmacology and I shall certainly make these suggestions in the article, and any others you and anyone else in the field think should be made. If you decide to come here, we can talk about this. Otherwise I'd be grateful for any epistolary suggestions. Let me know what you and Abe [Hoffer] think about the advisability of a meeting. I have no strong feelings one way or another—except that I should certainly like to see you.

Meanwhile I am very busy on my articles on the fate of liberty in the modern world. The problem is to keep it snappy, but not to oversimplify or leave out too much.

Ever yours,
Aldous

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 790]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
16 February, 1958

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… One of the things that should be read to a person under LSD is Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* including the extraordinary "Memorable Fancies" that precede and follow the "Proverbs of Hell." Read the thing through and see if you don't agree. I'm sure that if this were put on a tape it would be found extremely enlightening by the subject. Incidentally, I found on one of the occasions I took LSD that listening to records of poetry or of religious utterances is valuable in many ways. There is first of all the same strange experience which one gets from listening to music—the sense that, though the tempo remains unaltered, the piece endures for ages. The poetry or the religious utterances take on this same quasi-eternal quality. Another interesting point—one seems to penetrate the inner significance of what is being read, the meaning for oneself, more completely than in ordinary circumstances. Thus, the cultured melancholy resignation of Matthew Arnold, which I ordinarily like and feel at home with, is felt under LSD to be far too negative—unrealistically so.

I have just had a letter from [Duncan] Blewett [2] suggesting a date in early May for a meeting. Alternately one in October. I don't expect to be here in October, but shall almost certainly be here in May.

My love to the family.

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. ALBERT HOFMANN [3] [SMITH 796]

Gran Hotel Bolivar, Lima
3 August, 1958

DEAR DR. HOFMANN,

Your letter of July 16th reached me just as I was setting out for South America, and I am writing now from Peru (the land of a most unsatisfactory and dangerous mind-changing drug—coca—still consumed in great quantities by the Indians, mainly, I am told, to suppress the pains of hunger, only too common in the high Andes).

What you say about psillocybin [psilocybin] interests me very much, and I hope that I may have an opportunity of learning more about this new door into the Other World of the mind while I am in Europe this autumn.

Do you intend to be present at the pharmacological Congress in Rome in September? It is possible that I may be there as an interested observer and learner—but I am not yet certain if I can manage it… . If we do not meet in Rome, I will try to visit you in Switzerland.

Yours very truly,
Aldous Huxley

Chapter 24

1958
Drugs that Shape Men's Minds
ALDOUS HUXLEY

The Saturday Evening Post *commissioned the following article, and Huxley seized the opportunity to express some of his revolutionary views to a mass audience. He believed that alcoholism and other forms of drug addiction were as much a consequence of self-transcendent yearnings as were mystical theology, spiritual exercises, and yoga. The manner in which society treats this phenomenon—selective prohibition with taxation, or outright suppression—has caused "millions of would-be mystics to become addicts." But here Huxley is more optimistic than in "Brave New World Revisited," pointing towards chemically-induced "heightened intelligence" and spiritual evolution. Noting the predominance of the religious experience in peyote and LSD sessions, he predicted the religious revival—the Journey to the East, in Hesse's phrase—which shook Western society a decade later, when psychedelics and Hindu and Buddhist spiritual techniques became available to large numbers of youths. But the widespread and casual social use of psychedelic substances, often adulterated, would have appalled and certainly saddened Huxley.*

This essay represents Huxley's homage to William James, the great American psychologist and philosopher, who experimented with two mind alterants: peyote and nitrous oxide.

IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY many more people have died for their drink and their dope than have died for their religion or their country. The craving for ethyl alcohol and the opiates has been stronger, in these millions, than the love of God, of home, of children; even of life. Their cry was not for liberty or death; it was for death preceded by enslavement. There is a paradox here, and a mystery. Why should such multitudes of men and women be so ready to sacrifice themselves for a cause so utterly hopeless and in ways so painful and so profoundly humiliating?

To this riddle there is, of course, no simple or single answer. Human beings are immensely complicated creatures, living simultaneously in a half dozen different worlds. Each individual is unique and, in a number of respects, unlike all the other members of the species. None

of our motives is unmixed, none of our actions can be traced back to a single source and, in any group we care to study, behavior patterns that are observably similar may be the result of many constellations of dissimilar causes.

Thus, there are some alcoholics who seem to have been biochemically predestined to alcoholism. (Among rats, as Prof. Roger Williams, of the University of Texas, has shown, some are born drunkards; some are born teetotalers and will never touch the stuff.) Other alcoholics have been foredoomed not by some inherited defect in their biochemical make-up, but by their neurotic reactions to distressing events in their childhood or adolescence. Again, others embark upon their course of slow suicide as a result of mere imitation and good fellowship because they have made such an "excellent adjustment to their group"—a process which, if the group happens to be criminal, idiotic or merely ignorant, can bring only disaster to the well-adjusted individual. Nor must we forget that large class of addicts who have taken to drugs or drink in order to escape from physical pain. Aspirin, let us remember, is a very recent invention. Until late in the Victorian era, "poppy and mandragora," along with henbane and ethyl alcohol, were the only pain relievers available to civilized man. Toothache, arthritis and neuralgia could, and frequently did, drive men and women to become opium addicts.

De Quincey, for example, first resorted to opium[1] in order to relieve "excruciating rheumatic pains of the head." He swallowed his poppy and, an hour later, "What a resurrection from the lowest depths of the inner spirit! What an apocalypse!" And it was not merely that he felt no more pain. "This negative effect was swallowed up in the immensity of those positive effects which had opened up before me, in the abyss of divine enjoyment thus suddenly revealed… . Here was the secret of happiness, about which the philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered."

"Resurrection, apocalypse, divine enjoyment, happiness… ." De Quincey's words lead us to the very heart of our paradoxical mystery. The problem of drug addiction and excessive drinking is not merely a matter of chemistry and psychopathology, of relief from pain and conformity with a bad society. It is also a problem in metaphysics—a problem, one might almost say, in theology. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James has touched on these metaphysical aspects of addiction:

> The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties in human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no.

> Drunkenness expands, unites and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things into the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it. To the poor and unlettered it stands in the place of symphony concerts and literature and it is part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something that we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only through the fleeting earlier phases of what, in its totality, is so degrading a poison. The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole.

William James was not the first to detect a likeness between drunkenness and the mystical and premystical states. On that day of Pentecost there were people who explained the strange behavior of the disciples by saying, “These men are full of new wine.”

Peter soon undeceived them: “These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.”

And it is not only by “the dry critics of the sober hour” that the state of God-intoxication has been likened to drunkenness. In their efforts to express the inexpressible, the great mystics themselves have done the same. Thus, St. Theresa of Avila tells us that she “regards the centre of our soul as a cellar, into which God admits us as and when it pleases Him, so as to intoxicate us with the delicious wine of His Grace.”

Every fully developed religion exists simultaneously on several different levels. It exists as a set of abstract concepts about the world and its governance. It exists as a set of rites and sacraments, as a traditional method for manipulating the symbols, by means of which beliefs about the cosmic order are expressed. It exists as the feelings of love, fear and devotion evoked by this manipulation of symbols.

And finally it exists as a special kind of feeling or intuition—a sense of the oneness of all things in their divine principle, a realization (to use the language of Hindu theology) that “thou art That,” a mystical experience of what seems self-evidently to be union with God.

The ordinary waking consciousness is a very useful and, on most occasions, an indispensable state of mind; but it is by no means the only form of consciousness, nor in all circumstances the best. Insofar as he transcends his ordinary self and his ordinary mode of awareness, the mystic is able to enlarge his vision, to look more deeply into the unfathomable miracle of existence.

The mystical experience is doubly valuable; it is valuable because it gives the experiencer a better understanding of himself and the world and because it may help him to lead a less self-centered and more creative life.

In hell, a great religious poet has written, the punishment of the lost is to be "their sweating selves, but worse." On earth we are not worse than we are, we are merely our sweating selves, period.

Alas, that is quite bad enough. We love ourselves to the point of idolatry; but we also intensely dislike ourselves—we find ourselves unutterably boring. Correlated with this distaste for the idolatrously worshipped self, there is in all of us a desire, sometimes latent, sometimes conscious and passionately expressed, to escape from the prison of our individuality, an urge to self-transcendence. It is to this urge that we owe mystical theology, spiritual exercises and yoga—to this, too, that we owe alcoholism and drug addiction.

Modern pharmacology has given us a host of new synthetics, but in the field of the naturally occurring mind changers it has made no radical discoveries. All the botanical sedatives, stimulants, vision revealers, happiness promoters and cosmic-consciousness arousers were found out thousands of years ago, before the dawn of history.

In many societies at many levels of civilization attempts have been made to fuse drug intoxication with God-intoxication. In ancient Greece, for example, ethyl alcohol had its place in the established religion. Dionysus, or Bacchus, as he was often called, was a true divinity. His worshipers addressed him as *Lusios,* "Liberator," or as *Theoinos,* "Godwine." The latter name telescopes fermented grape juice and the supernatural into a single pentecostal experience. "Born a god," writes Euripides, "Bacchus is poured out as a libation to the gods, and through him men receive good." Unfortunately they also receive harm. The blissful experience of self-transcendence which alcohol makes possible has to be paid for, and the price is exorbitantly high.

Complete prohibition of all chemical mind changers can be decreed, but cannot be enforced, and tends to create more evils than it cures. Even more unsatisfactory has been the policy of complete toleration and unrestricted availability. In England, during the first years of the eighteenth century, cheap untaxed gin—"drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence"—threatened society with complete demoralization. A century later, opium, in the form of laudanum, was reconciling the victims of the Industrial Revolution to their lot—but at an appalling cost in terms of addiction, illness and early death. Today most civilized societies follow a course between the two extremes of total prohibition and total toleration. Certain mind-changing drugs, such as alcohol, are permitted and made available to the public on

payment of a very high tax, which tends to restrict their consumption. Other mind changers are unobtainable except under doctors' orders—or illegally from a dope pusher. In this way the problem is kept within manageable bounds. It is most certainly not solved. In their ceaseless search for self-transcendence, millions of would-be mystics become addicts, commit scores of thousands of crimes and are involved in hundreds of thousands of avoidable accidents.

Do we have to go on in this dismal way indefinitely? Up until a few years ago, the answer to such a question would have been a rueful "Yes, we do." Today, thanks to recent developments in biochemistry and pharmacology, we are offered a workable alternative. We see that it may soon be possible for us to do something better in the way of chemical self-transcendence than what we have been doing so ineptly for the last seventy or eighty centuries.

Is it possible for a powerful drug to be completely harmless? Perhaps not. But the physiological cost can certainly be reduced to the point where it becomes negligible. There are powerful mind changers which do their work without damaging the taker's psychophysical organism and without inciting him to behave like a criminal or a lunatic. Biochemistry and pharmacology are just getting into their stride. Within a few years there will probably be dozens of powerful but—physiologically and socially speaking—very inexpensive mind changers on the market.

In view of what we already have in the way of powerful but nearly harmless drugs; in view, above all, of what unquestionably we are very soon going to have—we ought to start immediately to give some serious thought to the problem of the new mind changers. How ought they to be used? How can they be abused? Will human beings be better and happier for their discovery? Or worse and more miserable?

The matter requires to be examined from many points of view. It is simultaneously a question for biochemists and physicians, for psychologists and social anthropologists, for legislators and law-enforcement officers. And finally it is an ethical question and a religious question. Sooner or later—and the sooner, the better—the various specialists concerned will have to meet, discuss and then decide, in the light of the best available evidence and the most imaginative kind of foresight, what should be done. Meanwhile let us take a preliminary look at this many-faceted problem.

Last year American physicians wrote 48,000,000 prescriptions for tranquillizing drugs, many of which have been refilled, probably more than once. The tranquillizers are the best known of the new, nearly harmless mind changers. They can be used by most people, not indeed with complete impunity, but at a reasonably low physiological cost. Their enormous popularity bears witness to the fact that a great many

people dislike both their environment and "their sweating selves." Under tranquillizers the degree of their self-transcendence is not very great; but it is enough to make all the difference, in many cases, between misery and contentment.

In theory, tranquillizers should be given only to persons suffering from rather severe forms of neurosis or psychosis. In practice, unfortunately, many physicians have been carried away by the current pharmacological fashion and are prescribing tranquillizers to all and sundry. The history of medical fashions, it may be remarked, is at least as grotesque as the history of fashions in women's hats—at least as grotesque and, since human lives are at stake, considerably more tragic. In the present case, millions of patients who had no real need of the tranquillizers have been given the pills by their doctors and have learned to resort to them in every predicament, however triflingly uncomfortable. This is very bad medicine and, from the pill taker's point of view, dubious morality and poor sense.

There are circumstances in which even the healthy are justified in resorting to the chemical control of negative emotions. If you really can't keep your temper, let a tranquillizer keep it for you. But for healthy people to resort to a chemical mind changer every time they feel annoyed or anxious or tense is neither sensible nor right. Too much tension and anxiety can reduce a man's efficiency—but so can too little. There are many occasions when it is entirely proper for us to feel concerned, when an excess of placidity might reduce our chances of dealing effectively with a ticklish situation. On these occasions, tension mitigated and directed from within by the psychological methods of self-control is preferable from every point of view to complacency imposed from without by the methods of chemical control.

And now let us consider the case—not, alas, a hypothetical case—of two societies competing with each other. In Society A, tranquillizers are available by prescription and at a rather stiff price—which means, in practice, that their use is confined to that rich and influential minority which provides the society with its leadership. This minority of leading citizens consumes several billions of the complacency-producing pills every year. In Society B, on the other hand, the tranquillizers are not so freely available, and the members of the influential minority do not resort, on the slightest provocation, to the chemical control of what may be necessary and productive tension. Which of these two competing societies is likely to win the race? A society whose leaders make an excessive use of soothing syrups is in danger of falling behind a society whose leaders are not over-tranquillized.

Now let us consider another kind of drug—still undiscovered, but

probably just around the corner—a drug capable of making people feel happy in situations where they would normally feel miserable. Such a drug would be a blessing, but a blessing fraught with grave political dangers. By making harmless chemical euphoria freely available, a dictator could reconcile an entire population to a state of affairs to which self-respecting human beings ought not to be reconciled. Despots have always found it necessary to supplement force by political or religious propaganda. In this sense the pen is mightier than the sword. But mightier than either the pen or the sword is the pill. In mental hospitals it has been found that chemical restraint is far more effective than strait jackets or psychiatry. The dictatorships of tomorrow will deprive men of their freedom, but will give them in exchange a happiness none the less real, as a subjective experience, for being chemically induced. The pursuit of happiness is one of the traditional rights of man; unfortunately, the achievement of happiness may turn out to be incompatible with another of man's rights—namely, liberty.

It is quite possible, however, that pharmacology will restore with one hand what it takes away with the other. Chemically induced euphoria could easily become a threat to individual liberty; but chemically induced vigor and chemically heightened intelligence could easily be liberty's strongest bulwark. Most of us function at about 15 per cent of capacity. How can we step up our lamentably low efficiency?

Two methods are available—the educational and the biochemical. We can take adults and children as they are and give them a much better training than we are giving them now. Or, by appropriate biochemical mehods, we can transform them into superior individuals. If these superior individuals are given a superior education, the results will be revolutionary. They will be startling even if we continue to subject them to the rather poor educational methods at present in vogue.

Will it in fact be possible to produce superior individuals by biochemical means? The Russians certainly believe it. They are now halfway through a Five Year Plan to produce "pharmacological substances that normalize higher nervous activity and heighten human capacity for work." Precursors of these future mind improvers are already being experimented with. It has been found, for example, that when given in massive doses some of the vitamins—nicotinic acid and ascorbic acid are examples—sometimes produce a certain heightening of psychic energy. A combination of two enzymes—ethylene disulphonate and adenosine triphosphate, which, when injected together, improve carbohydrate metabolism in nervous tissue—may also turn out to be effective.

Meanwhile good results are being claimed for various new synthetic, nearly harmless stimulants. There is iproniazid, which, according to some authorities, "appears to increase the total amount of psychic energy." Unfortunately, iproniazid in large doses has side effects which in some cases may be extremely serious! Another psychic energizer is an amino alcohol which is thought to increase the body's production of acetylcholine, a substance of prime importance in the functioning of the nervous system. In view of what has already been achieved, it seems quite possible that, within a few years, we may be able to lift ourselves up by our own biochemical bootstraps.

In the meantime let us all fervently wish the Russians every success in their current pharmacological venture. The discovery of a drug capable of increasing the average individual's psychic energy, and its wide distribution throughout the U.S.S.R., would probably mean the end of Russia's present form of government. Generalized intelligence and mental alertness are the most powerful enemies of dictatorship and at the same time the basic conditions of effective democracy. Even in the democratic West we could do with a bit of psychic energizing. Between them, education and pharmacology may do something to offset the effects of that deterioration of our biological material to which geneticists have frequently called attention.

From these political and ethical considerations let us now pass to the strictly religious problems that will be posed by some of the new mind changers. We can foresee the nature of these future problems by studying the effects of a natural mind changer, which has been used for centuries past in religious worship; I refer to the peyote cactus of Northern Mexico and the Southwestern United States. Peyote contains mescalin—which can now be produced synthetically—and mescalin, in William James' phrase, "stimulates the mystical faculties in human nature" far more powerfully and in a far more enlightening way than alcohol and, what is more, it does so at a physiological and social cost that is negligibly low. Peyote produces self-transcendence in two ways —it introduces the taker into the Other World of visionary experience, and it gives him a sense of solidarity with his fellow worshippers, with human beings at large and with the divine nature of things.

The effects of peyote can be duplicated by synthetic mescalin and by LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), a derivative of ergot. Effective in incredibly small doses, LSD is now being used experimentally by psychotherapists in Europe, in South America, in Canada and the United States. It lowers the barrier between conscious and subconscious and permits the patient to look more deeply and understandingly into the recesses of his own mind. The deepening of self-knowledge takes place against a background of visionary and even mystical experience.

When administered in the right kind of psychological environment, these chemical mind changers make possible a genuine religious experience. Thus a person who takes LSD or mescalin may suddenly understand—not only intellectually but organically, experientially—the meaning of such tremendous religious affirmations as "God is love," or "Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."

It goes without saying that this kind of temporary self-transcendence is no guarantee of permanent enlightenment or a lasting improvement of conduct. It is a "gratuitous grace," which is neither necessary nor sufficient for salvation, but which, if properly used, can be enormously helpful to those who have received it. And this is true of all such experiences, whether occurring spontaneously, or as the result of swallowing the right kind of chemical mind changer, or after undertaking a course of "spiritual exercises" or bodily mortification.

Those who are offended by the idea that the swallowing of a pill may contribute to a genuinely religious experience should remember that all the standard mortifications—fasting, voluntary sleeplessness and self-torture—inflicted upon themselves by the ascetics of every religion for the purpose of acquiring merit, are also, like the mind-changing drugs, powerful devices for altering the chemistry of the body in general and the nervous system in particular. Or consider the procedures generally known as spiritual exercises. The breathing techniques taught by the yogi of India result in prolonged suspensions of respiration. These in turn result in an increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood; and the psychological consequence of this is a change in the quality of consciousness. Again, meditations involving long, intense concentration upon a single idea or image may also result—for neurological reasons which I do not profess to understand—in a slowing down of respiration and even in prolonged suspensions of breathing.

Many ascetics and mystics have practiced their chemistry-changing mortifications and spiritual exercises while living, for longer or shorter periods, as hermits. Now, the life of a hermit, such as Saint Anthony, is a life in which there are very few external stimuli. But as Hebb, John Lilly and other experimental psychologists have recently shown in the laboratory, a person in a limited environment, which provides very few external stimuli, soon undergoes a change in the quality of his consciousness and may transcend his normal self to the point of hearing voices or seeing visions, often extremely unpleasant, like so many of Saint Anthony's visions, but sometimes beatific.

That men and women can, by physical and chemical means, transcend themselves in a genuinely spiritual way is something which, to the squeamish idealist, seems rather shocking. But, after all, the

drug or the physical exercise is not the cause of the spiritual experience; it is only its occasion.

Writing of William James' experiments with nitrous oxide, Bergson has summed up the whole matter in a few lucid sentences. 'The psychic disposition was there, potentially, only waiting a signal to express itself in action. It might have been evoked spiritually by an effort made on his own spiritual level. But it could just as well be brought about materially, by an inhibition of what inhibited it, by the removing of an obstacle; and this effect was the wholly negative one produced by the drug." [2] Where, for any reason, physical or moral, the psychological dispositions are unsatisfactory, the removal of obstacles by a drug or by ascetic practices will result in a negative rather than a positive spiritual experience. Such an infernal experience is extremely distressing, but may also be extremely salutary. There are plenty of people to whom a few hours in hell—the hell that they themselves have done so much to create—could do a world of good.

Physiologically costless, or nearly costless, stimulators of the mystical faculties are now making their appearance, and many kinds of them will soon be on the market. We can be quite sure that, as and when they become available, they will be extensively used. The urge to self-transcendence is so strong and so general that it cannot be otherwise. In the past, very few people have had spontaneous experiences of a pre-mystical or fully mystical nature; still fewer have been willing to undergo the psychophysical disciplines which prepare an insulated individual for this kind of self-transcendence. The powerful but nearly costless mind changers of the future will change all this completely. Instead of being rare, premystical and mystical experiences will become common. What was once the spiritual privilege of the few will be made available to the many. For the ministers of the world's organized religions, this will raise a number of unprecedented problems. For most people, religion has always been a matter of traditional symbols and of their own emotional, intellectual and ethical response to those symbols. To men and women who have had direct experience of self-transcendence into the mind's Other World of vision and union with the nature of things, a religion of mere symbols is not likely to be very satisfying. The perusal of a page from even the most beautifully written cookbook is no substitute for the eating of dinner. We are exhorted to *"taste* and see that the Lord is good."

In one way or another, the world's ecclesiastical authorities will have to come to terms with the new mind changers. They may come to terms with them negatively, by refusing to have anything to do with them. In that case, a psychological phenomenon, potentially of great spiritual value, will manifest itself outside the pale of organized

religion. On the other hand, they may choose to come to terms with the mind changers in some positive way—exactly how, I am not prepared to guess.

My own belief is that, though they may start by being something of an embarrassment, these new mind changers will tend in the long run to deepen the spiritual life of the communities in which they are available. That famous "revival of religion," about which so many people have been talking for so long, will not come about as the result of evangelistic mass meetings or the television appearances of photogenic clergymen. It will come about as the result of biochemical discoveries that will make it possible for large numbers of men and women to achieve a radical self-transcendence and a deeper understanding of the nature of things. And this revival of religion will be at the same time a revolution. From being an activity mainly concerned with symbols, religion will be transformed into an activity concerned mainly with experience and intuition—an everyday mysticism underlying and giving significance to everyday rationality, everyday tasks and duties, everyday human relationships.

Chapter 25

1959
Letters

Huxley was visiting professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he lectured on "The Human Condition"; the rest of his working time was devoted to ironing out the troublesome problem of a story-line for his utopian phantasy. The American Academy of Arts and Letters honored him with their Award of Merit for the Novel, which had previously gone to Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Mann and Theodore Dreiser. Interviewed by Joe Hyams in This Week Magazine (8 *Nov.* 1959), *Huxley said: "The inner world is almost as large as outer space." To Father Thomas Merton he presented an eloquent defense of the validity of the drug-induced religious experience; and likewise to Margaret Isherwood, using the phrase "going beyond vision" in describing his later sessions. He provides Osmond with examples both of successful and "vulgar … profoundly disturbing" cases of LSD therapy. Although LSD was not illegal until* 1966, *the difficulty of a layman securing it in* 1959 *is evident in his request to Osmond.*

TO FR. THOMAS MERTON [SMITH 808]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Cal.
10 January, 1959

DEAR FATHER MERTON,

Thank you for your letter. The problems you raise are interesting and difficult, and their solution must be sought on the practical and factual level, A great deal of work has now been done on mescalin and lysergic acid, both by researchers and clinicians using the drugs therapeutically in such conditions as alcoholism and assorted neuroses. (One group now working on alcoholism in British Columbia, incidentally, is using lysergic acid within a religious, specifically Catholic, frame of reference, and achieving remarkable results, largely by getting patients to realize that the universe is profoundly different from what, on their ordinary, conditioned level of experience, it had seemed to be.) Statistically the results of all this experimentation are

roughly as follows. About seventy per cent of those who take the drug have a positive experience; the others have a negative experience, which may be really infernal. (A great many of the states experienced by the desert fathers were negative. See the thousands of pictures of the Temptations of St. Anthony.) All agree that the experience is profoundly significant.[3] One finds again and again, in the reports written by subjects after the event, the statement that "this is the most wonderful experience I have ever had" and "I feel that my life will never be quite the same again." Among the positive experiences a certain proportion, on the first occasion of taking the drug, are purely aesthetic—transfiguration of the outer world so that it is seen as the young Wordsworth saw it and later described it in the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality in Childhood"; a universe of inconceivable beauty in which all things are full of life and charged with an obscure but immensely important meaning. Those who are congenitally good visualizers tend to see visions with the eyes closed, or even, projected upon the screen of the external world, with the eyes open. The nature of these visions is often paradisal and the descriptions of them remind one irresistibly of the description of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse or the Eden of Ezekiel, or the various paradises of other religions. Finally there are those whose experience seems to be much more than aesthetic and may be labeled as pre-mystical or even, I believe, mystical. In the course of the last five years I have taken mescalin twice and lysergic acid three or four times. My first experience was mainly aesthetic. Later experiences were of another nature and helped me to understand many of the obscure utterances to be found in the writings of the mystics, Christian and Oriental. An unspeakable sense of gratitude for the privilege of being born into this universe. ("Gratitude is heaven itself," says Blake—and I know now exactly what he was talking about.) A transcendence of the ordinary subject-object relationship. A transcendence of the fear of death. A sense of solidarity with the world and its spiritual principle and the conviction that, in spite of pain, evil and the rest, everything is somehow all right. (One understands such phrases as, "Yea, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" and the great utterance, I can't quote it exactly, of Julian of Norwich.) Finally, an understanding, not intellectual, but in some sort total, an understanding with the entire organism, of the affirmation that God is Love. The experiences are transient, of course; but the memory of them, and the inchoate revivals of them which tend to recur spontaneously or during meditation, continue to exercise a profound effect upon one's mind. There seems to be no evidence in the published literature that the drug is habit forming or that it creates a craving for repetition. There is a feeling—I speak from personal experience and from word-of-

mouth reports given me by others—that the experience is so transcendently important that it is in no circumstances a thing to be entered upon light-heartedly or for enjoyment. (In some respects, it is not enjoyable; for it entails a temporary death of the ego, a going-beyond.) Those who desire to make use of this "gratuitous grace," to cooperate with it, tend to do so, not by repeating the experiment at frequent intervals, but by trying to open themselves up, in a state of alert passivity, to the transcendent "isness," to use Eckhart's phrase, which they have known and, in some sort, *been.* Theoretically, there exists a danger that subjects would have a craving for constant repetition of the chemically induced experience. In practice this craving doesn't seem to manifest itself. A repetition every year, or every six months, is felt, most often, to be the desirable regimen.

A friend of mine, saved from alcoholism, during the last fatal phases of the disease, by a spontaneous theophany, which changed his life as completely as St. Paul's was changed by his theophany on the road to Damascus, has taken lysergic acid two or three times and affirms that his experience under the drug is identical with the spontaneous experience which changed his life—the only difference being that the spontaneous experience did not last so long as the chemically induced one. There is, obviously, a field here for serious and reverent experimentation.

With all good wishes, I am

Yours very sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

TO MARGARET ISHERWOOD [SMITH 818]

3276 Deronda, LA. 28, Cal.
12 August, 1959

DEAR MARGARET,

Thank you for your letter. I am now more or less as good as new, thank goodness—had a really providential escape.[2] As for visionary and mystical experience—I think they are different, but that the first is apt to lead into the second. In my first experiment with mescalin I had a merely aesthetic visionary experience: but since then, with LSD and again with mescalin, I have gone *beyond vision* into many of the experiences described in Eastern and Western literature—the transcendence of the subject-object relationship, the sense of solidarity with all the world so that one actually knows by experience what "God is love" means: the sense that, in spite of death and suffering, everything is somehow ultimately All Right (tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him); the sense of boundless gratitude at being privileged to

inhabit this universe. (Blake says, "Gratitude is heaven itself"—it used to be an incomprehensible phrase: now I know precisely what he was talking about.)

[Hugh] Fausset is quite wrong—speaking on *a priori* moralistic grounds and not out of direct experience. This matter of drugs and mystical experience was discussed years ago by Bergson in *The Two Sources* … apropos of Wm. James and laughing gas. That a chemical can help people to get out of their own light is distressing to many people; but it happens to be a fact. That the experience is a "gratuitous grace," neither necessary nor sufficient for salvation, is certain. Ethical and cognitive effort is needed if the experiencer is to go forward from his one-shot experience to permanent enlightenment.

Yours,
Aldous

P.S. Gratuitous graces are not necessary or sufficient—but they can be very helpful if we choose to let them help us.
P.P.S. Subud is simply a technique for reproducing the quaking of the early Quakers—a release via the muscles. Very good in many cases.

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 825]

3276 Deronda Dr.,
LA. 28, Cal
29 November, 1959

DEAR HUMPHRY,

… I am near the end of my lecturing at Santa Barbara—one more panel discussion of a Darwin Centenary lecture by Prof. John Randall, and two more lectures of my own. After which I shall be free to work whole-time on my book. As for plans—I am invited to go in late March or April to Topeka, to be a visiting professor for a few weeks at the Menninger Foundation. It will be interesting, I think, to penetrate the holy of holies of American psychiatry and to take a searching look. Nathan Kline's report on Soviet psychiatry, as summarized in *Time,* was interesting and no doubt, to Menninger et al., disturbing. Have you read the full report? I think I will write and ask him to send it me. Laura, meanwhile, works away at her psychotherapy—with remarkable results in many cases: for she seems to have an intuitive knowledge of what to do at any given moment, what technique to use in each successive phase of the patient's mood and feeling. She has had some very good results with therapy under LSD in a few cases where the method seemed to be justifiable. (Incidentally, what frightful people there are in your profession! We met two Beverly Hills

psychiatrists the other day, who specialize in LSD therapy at $100 a shot—and, really, I [have] seldom met people of lower sensitivity, more vulgar mind! To think of people made vulnerable by LSD being exposed to such people is profoundly disturbing. But what can one do about the problem? Psychiatry is an art based on a still imperfect science—and as in all the arts there are more bad and indifferent practitioners than good ones. How can one keep the bad artists out? Bad artists don't matter in painting or literature—but they matter enormously in therapy and education; for whole lives and destinies may be affected by their shortcomings. But one doesn't see any practical way in which the ungifted and the unpleasant can be filtered out and only the gifted and good let through.) And talking of LSD—would it be possible for you to send me half a dozen doses of it? I want to try some experiments myself and Laura would like to give it to a couple of people, to round off their therapy. I don't want to bother Sid Cohen too often—and don't want to have to ask people like [—] or [—] or [—], who have the stuff, use it badly and of whom I disapprove. If this is feasible, I'd be most grateful. And if it isn't feasible, who should I apply to in the Sandoz [1] set-up?

Give my love to Jane and the children.

Yours affectionately,
Aldous

Chapter 26

1959
The Final Revolution

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Speaking again as a man of letters among scientists and technicians, Huxley defined his task as creating "a bridge between science and the general world." He notes the superior ability of literary people to describe effects of drugs on the mind, and hopes for a language that will enable people "to talk about a mystical experience simultaneously in terms of theology, of psychology, and of bio-chemistry." The drug prophecy of Brave New World, which the author supposed would not be realized for several centuries, was confirmed after just 27 years: there was now a patented drug on the market bearing the name "Soma" Huxley urged his audience to deal with the question of the human being under pharmacological attack, recalling his warning made in 1936 *that "the propagandists of the future will probably be chemists and physiologists as well as writers."*

I ASKED MYSELF tonight what exactly I am doing in this company. I'm probably the only bachelor of arts in this large conference of doctors of various sciences. I come here as a kind of ignoramus in the midst of a great sea of specialized knowledge. There is a very curious line which has been preserved from the Greek poet Archilochus. It has been made the title of an interesting essay on Tolstoy by Isaiah Berlin. It runs as follows: 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing' Now this is a cryptic line. But in the matter of natural history it is clear what it means: The fox has all kinds of tricks, but the hedgehog can fold itself up into a ball and can completely resist the fox. It is a line capable of application in many fields. In literature, for example, there are the fox writers and there are the hedgehog writers. There are the foxes, who look over an enormous area and know many, many things. The supreme example, of course, is Shakespeare. And there are the hedgehogs, who concentrate upon one idea and develop it to the limit, and here the supreme example is, of course, Dante.

In the present instance I think we can apply this idea to the specialists and non-specialists, and here I can say that I am a kind of rather low-class fox in the midst of a great number of very high-class

hedgehogs, and what am I doing? What is the value of my presence here?

Well, obviously I can't compete with any of the hedgehogs. I listen to the papers here and many of them to me are exceedingly interesting and I derive a great deal of profit from them. But I confess when the hedgehogs go too chemical, I just fold up and don't know what is being talked about. Nevertheless, I feel that the fox, with his knowledge, rather superficial knowledge, of many things, his wide-ranging many-pointed activity, has a value, and can do something, especially if he is prepared to work with the hedgehogs.

We are up against, of course, the great problem of specialization. I was reading the other day an extremely interesting book which is going to come out this spring, dealing with my grandfather's activity as an educational reformer. He was, over and above his activities as a biologist, tremendously interested and active in social affairs, and he was largely responsible for the curriculum of the London School Board when education was made universal and gratuitous in England. And he did a great deal to make the University of London into a really modern university, with specialist departments in all fields. He realized you had to have specialization to explore the depths of scientific knowledge.

But the interesting thing is that twenty years later, two or three years before his death, he was deeply concerned with undoing the effects of specialization. He wanted to get the professors out of their separate pigeonholes, to meet together in a concerted effort to pool their specialized knowledge and to bring it out into the world. And after nearly seventy years, this remains one of our enormous problems. How to make the best of both worlds: the world of specialization, which is absolutely necessary, and the world of general communication and interest in the larger affairs of life, which is also necessary.

And here I think the man of letters has a contribution to make. He can, if he chooses to associate a little with hedgehogs, do something to form a bridge between science and the general world. This seems to me a matter of crucial importance. We seem to have a really schizophrenic attitude now.

If I had the control of education I would start pointing out to children, of quite small age, that the fundamental rule of morality, the golden rule, begins on the sub-human level, even the sub-biological level. If you want nature to treat you well, you must treat nature well. If you start destroying nature, nature will destroy you, and this basic moral precept is fundamental in our present knowledge of ecology and conservation. What we know now about ecology points to the fact that nature exists in the most delicate balance, and that anything which

tends to upset the balance will produce consequences of the most unexpected character and often of the most disastrous character. We see then that many of the most important ethical truths flow quite naturally and simply from scientific facts, and I feel very strongly that this kind of bridging between the world of pure science and the world of ethics should be made from the earliest age.

But meanwhile, the man of letters can do a lot toward establishing this bridge. Men of letters have devoted a great deal of thought to the relationship between mind and body, brain and body, and general physique and spirit, and have produced some extremely interesting, what may be called pre-scientific, results in this field. For example, if one compares medieval psychology or the psychology of the 16th Century with the poetry of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* one perceives the enormous superiority of the literary artist to the scientific man of the period. The same is true of Shakespeare. When one examines the official psychology of the epoch, one is amazed by its crudity; but when one looks at the plays of Shakespeare, one is still more amazed by the enormous subtlety of the psychology, and the penetration of this extraordinary man. Official psychology, scientific psychology does not begin to catch up with literary psychology until well into the second half of the 19th century. It's incredible to perceive the barrenness of the official psychological doctrine of the period in comparison with the literary psychology of such novelists as Balzac or Dickens or George Eliot or Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. One is astounded at the poverty of the scientific formulations in comparison with the extraordinary richness and subtlety which these men, through observation and intuition, had set down in their novels. It is amusing, also, to see the way in which certain of the problems which are being discussed now, the effect of drugs upon the mind for example, were discussed and understood by the great masters of literature in the past.

We were mentioning the problem of alcohol just now. It's interesting to see how these men perceived the fact that the effects of alcohol were profoundly different according to the temperament and constitution of the persons who took it. And, incidentally, I haven't attended all the sittings of the conference to date, but among those I have attended I was struck by the absence of reference to the profoundly important fact that the human species is more variable than any other species in the whole realm of nature. In general we may say that specie variability increases as we rise up the evolutionary scale, and that the maximum of variability is in the human species, that we are profoundly different as individuals, one from another, both structurally and even bio-chemically. And it is interesting, for example, to see the way Shakespeare points out that the drunkenness of a Falstaff is totally different from the drunkenness

of a Cassio, a military figure belonging to the extreme of what Sheldon would call the somatic pole of human variability. Both these drunkennesses are again quite different from the drunkenness which would be manifested, for example, by a person with my kind of physique. While I would be feeling extremely ill and very, very melancholy, Cassio would be extremely aggressive, and Falstaff would be extremely jolly. This profound variability between individuals is to be noted, I suppose, in regard to not merely alcohol, but to all other drugs. I merely point out this fact to show that the literary man has made very acute observations from very early on in the history of culture.

We come now to the question of language. In his paper yesterday, Dr. Joel Elkes dwelled on the fact that the language is lacking for discussing many of these problems, and he expressed the hope that within a short time we should be able to make use of mathematics for these discussions. But so far as the general public is concerned, mathematics is not very helpful, and here the man of letters, I think, can perform a very important task. Our problem is to adapt a language which is not now suitable to describing the continuum of mind and body, a universe of complete continuity. Somehow or other we have to invent the means of talking about these problems in an artistically varied way which shall make them accessible to the general public. Ideally, for example, we ought to be able to talk about a mystical experience simultaneously in terms of theology, of psychology and of biochemistry. This is a pretty tall order, but unless we can do something of the kind, it will remain extraordinarily difficult for people to think about this continuous web of life, to think about it as a continuum, and not in terms of the old Platonic and Cartesian dualism which so extraordinarily falsifies our picture of the world. How we are going to do this, how the literary men are going to achieve this miracle of language, I don't know, but I think it has to be achieved. And maybe we shall. Maybe some future Shakespeare will arise with an immense command of language, able to take our existing English, and somehow, by some miracle of poetry or miracle of poetic prose, render this picture of a continuum. This is something I myself have thought about a great deal, and frankly I do not have enough talent for the task.

As long ago as the beginning of the 19th Century, Wordsworth in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* made the statement that the time would come when the remotest discovery of the physicist and the chemist would become a suitable subject for poetry. More than 150 years have passed since then, and still these fields remain very much apart. We have not yet made the fusion, and this is a matter men of letters should think about very carefully.

So much for a sort of apology for my existence here.

Let us get down to the theme of this talk, which I have called *The Final Revolution.*

The Final Revolution, as I see it, is the application to human affairs, both on the social level and on the individual level, of technology. Now what is technology? Technology, technique in general, I suppose, is the application in a perfectly conscious and rational way of well-thought-out methods of doing things efficiently. The watchword is "efficiency."

The beginnings of technology, in modern times, were in the field of industrial production, in the field of applying machines and factory work to the problems of producing, first, woven goods, then metallurgical goods, and increasingly to other manufacture. Then, with the creation of more and more complicated machinery, it became necessary to apply technique to specifically human spheres. In general we may say that the more complicated the physical machinery is, the more complicated does the organization have to become in the society which uses these machines.

The application of technique to sociological, political and governmental problems, of course, is ancient, if sporadic. For example, in the Old Testament, in the Book of Samuel and the Book of Chronicles, we read that King David ordered the numbering of people. He ordered a census, which is one of the first procedures followed by any efficient and technically minded government. But it is interesting to note that David ordered it expressly against the will of Jehovah, and as the result of temptation by Satan. So we see that in this Bronze Age period, in which the Books of Samuel and Chronicles were written, there was a powerful anti-technical feeling. People felt very strongly that there was a great danger in letting the government come in and find out all about them.

There is a great deal of foundation for such suspicion, and in the examination of history we see that one of the great bulwarks of liberty has always been—inefficiency. The desire to be a tyrant has frequently existed, but the means for being tyrannical often have been extraordinarily inadequate. The spirit of despotism was strong but the flesh was weak. Take the case of Louis XIV. Louis XIV proclaimed himself an absolute monarch and would have liked to regiment everybody, but his technical armory was most inadequate, and it was quite easy for individuals to slip between the meshes of his widely woven net. Even in the time of Napoleon, one is struck by the inefficiency of his police chief, Fouchette, a man of enormous ability, with a highly-organized department.

But compared with the efficiency of police forces even in the democratic state today, these people were wildly inept. And there was

a great deal of individual liberty, simply because the people on top couldn't get hold of the masses.

These sporadic and preliminary efforts in what might be called technicizing governmental control have gone on all through history. For example, the Roman world was amazingly well-organized in many ways. They technicized the military forces in a way they were not technicized again until the second half of the 18th Century. They had a technical and rational system of law such as we didn't see again until the time of Napoleon and the reform of English law during the 19th Century. But of course all of this disappeared, and during the Middle Ages we had an extraordinary anti-technical world in which organization was, so to speak—one doesn't like to use the word—but it was in a way, *natural.* Organizations developed, the guilds for example, which grew from the association of people doing the same sort of thing, without any kind of worked-out system. And it was all remarkably inefficient.

It had to be completely broken down at the time of the French Revolution in order to make possible the great development of technology which followed. These, what may be called natural societies, had to be atomized, disintegrated so as to permit organization on the grand technical scale to take place.

Today we see the application of technique to human affairs on a greater scale in all countries, and I would say that the really important distinction between the Communist world and the world of the West is not based on the Marxist theory that calls for public ownership of the means of production. This is a sort of mythology of the Soviet world. But the real difference is that the Communists are prepared to permit technicization to go to the absolute limit, while we have considerable qualms about allowing this thing to override our old traditions of personal liberty and democratic institutions. Marx and Engels gave extraordinary importance to the technical aspect of social organization; and what we see in Russia now is a world in which technology is given free play, and in which man is more and more subordinated to the needs of technology.

And one of the gravest dangers that confronts us is precisely this: that we are being forced by technology along the same road which the Russians have voluntarily taken, but we are being pushed this way. Technology tends to grow and develop according to the laws of its own being. It doesn't at all develop according to the laws of our being. The two things are quite separate, and man now finds himself subordinated to this thing which he created, and subject to its laws, which are not at all human laws.

We see this technicization going on in many, many fields. For example in the field of government, even in the liberal and democratic

governments, it is quite clear that the whole apparatus of government is becoming more and more technicized. In this country there are, I believe, no less than fifty-six agencies of the government dealing with statistics alone; it has become necessary for us to have this immense armory of technical knowledge in order to permit the thing to run at all. Then there are the actual powers of the government that have been so immensely strengthened by the advances in technology. The police, for example, have powers which, as I stated, the police of Napoleon simply couldn't approach at all. It is not merely a question that they possess superior arms or they have means of communication which the older police forces did not possess. It is also a question that they have extremely elaborate methods of recording things. Everybody's position is recorded on punched cards, on microfilm and so on. This is an entirely new fact. There is an immense mass of information about everybody in the hands of the central government which never existed before. This thing for which David was punished has now reached an eminence which was absolutely unimaginable even 100 years ago.

This is only one of the fields in which we see the advance of technique. We see it again in the economic field where, even in the Western countries, the old habit of leaving economy entirely to the free market is largely replaced by a most elaborate system of plans.

Technicization is being even further accelerated by the enormously rapid increase in numbers. As the numbers increase, so do the problems of organization. The great difficulties which arise as numbers press more and more heavily upon resources entail inevitably a much more intensive planning activity of the central government. And as numbers increase during the next fifty years, as they evidently will—we are now increasing at about forty-five millions a year on the planet—as this happens, I think we will see a further technicization, a further usurpation by the central authority of functions which used to be in the hands of private people.

And now we come to the most interesting and possibly the most alarming aspect of this technicization of human life, which is technique as applied to individuals, not merely to societies on the large scale, but to the individual, and this can be divided into various categories.

There is, first of all of course, the amazingly well-developed technique, propaganda. Propaganda may be defined as opposed to rational argument, argument based upon facts. Argument based on facts aims at producing an intellectual conviction; propaganda aims, above all, at producing reflex action. It is aimed at bypassing the rational choice based upon knowledge of facts and getting directly at the solar plexus, so to speak, and affecting the subconscious. The

efficacy of propaganda was demonstrated on the most terrifying scale in Hitlerian Germany; it is demonstrated again in Communist dictatorship, and it is demonstrated in this country by the extreme effectiveness of commercial advertising.

The technicization of the means of getting at the human unconscious presents an enormous danger to our whole traditional conception of democracy and of liberty. It seems to make complete nonsense of the democratic process, which, after all, is based upon the assumption that voters make rational choices on the basis of facts. And when one reads in a book like *The Hidden Persuaders* that in this country both political parties employ advertising agents to run the machinery of their campaigns, one is alarmed, and one wonders how long the democratic tradition can survive in the teeth of a technical method which is carefully rigged to bypass rational choice, and to affect people on a level below reason, on almost a physiological level.

Then we see again technicization of persuasion as it is manifested in the processes of brainwashing, which is based very carefully on the work of Pavlov, and which is, as far as we can judge from the results achieved in China and among war prisoners in Korea, exceedingly efficient, and probably going to become more and more efficient as time goes on.

Finally we come to the question of attacking the human being on the physiological level, by pharmacological means. Here is where the present conference, I think, has to start thinking about what is going to happen with these drugs as they are developed. How are they going to be used? How are we going to be sure they will be used well? It seems to me perfectly in the cards that a euphoric drug far more efficient and less harmful than alcohol may be produced, and if this should be made available, and should be introduced into every bottle of Coca Cola, then clearly, as I ventured to point out more than twenty-five years ago in *Brave New World,* this could become an incredibly powerful instrument in the hands of a dictator. What is becoming, I think, quite clear now is that the dictatorships of the future probably will not be based on terror, as the dictatorships of the immediate past have been, the dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin. Terror is an extremely wasteful, stupid and inefficient method of controlling people. The Romans discovered this many years ago. As far as possible they tried to rule their empire by consent and not by mere coercion. And we are now in a position to do far better than the Romans, because we have this enormous armory of techniques which will permit the rulers to make their subjects actually *like* their slavery. In *Brave New World* the distribution of this mysterious drug, which I called Soma and whose name has now been taken by the Wallace Laboratories (for something not nearly as good, I might say), the

distribution of this drug was a plank in the political platform—it was simultaneously one of the great instruments of power in the hands of the central authority, and at the same time it was one of the great privileges of the masses to be allowed to take this drug, because it made them so happy. This naturally was a fantasy, but it is a fantasy which now is a great deal nearer to being realized than I thought, than it was, certainly, at that time. And it seems to me perfectly in the cards that there will be within the next generation or so a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak. Producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel—by propaganda, brain washing, or brain washing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to me to be *The Final Revolution.*

In the past we have had revolutions which were all on the periphery of things. The environment was changed in the hope of changing the individual at the center of the environment. Today, thanks to the application of techniques to human beings, we are in a position to change the human being. So that the final revolution will concern the man and the woman as they are, and not the environment in which they live, and I can't see how one could go any further than the ultimate nature of this revolution.

Now the question arises, what, if anything, can be done about this steady advance of technicization? Obviously, stopping it is out of the question. Technicization is going on whether we like it or not, and also it seems perfectly clear that without a steady increase of technicization in many fields it will be almost impossible to manage or provide a decent life for the rapidly increasing numbers of the human species. So that we have to put up with the fact that this technical process is going to go on, and is going to go on developing according to the laws of its own being. It is going to be developed for the purpose of producing more and more efficiency, not necessarily for the purpose of producing fully developed human beings. That has nothing to do with it, nor have any questions of ethics got anything to do with it. The categorical imperative of technology is efficiency.

The question is, can we resist this, can we make the best of both worlds? It's not a question, as I say, of hoping to abolish techniques. This is quite hopeless, I think. It is a question of somehow making the best of both worlds so that we can enjoy the results of technology, which are order and efficiency and profusion of goods, and at the same time enjoy what human beings have always held to be of supreme importance, that is to say, liberty and the possibility of

spontaneity. This question of spontaneity is terribly important, and it is actually one of the great enemies of technique. A human being in a highly technicized productive unit is simply not allowed to be spontaneous. It just interferes with the plan laid down in advance by the engineers and technicians who decide how he should work, and in this way he, the human being, is profoundly diminished, because he is not permitted to be spontaneous.

Our problem is to find some way of permitting this spontaneity to come to the surface, and allowing liberty to exist and yet allowing technique to develop to the limits to which it has to develop, and this is an incredibly difficult problem. It is also a problem which is exceedingly urgent.

When I wrote *Brave New World* in 1932, I imagined that this sort of world would come into existence about 500 years from now. But a number of forecasts made in that fantasy have come true within twenty-seven years, and it seems quite likely that a number more of these forecasts will come true within the next generation, so there isn't much time. The urgency is greatly increased by the enormous growth of population. When one reflects, for example, that countries like Mexico are going to have their populations doubled in the next twenty-four years, one sees we must start doing things at once.

And I would think that the first step is to try to find out what is likely to happen. In the past we have let ourselves be taken by surprise by the development in technology. I don't think it was necessary. I don't think it was necessary that we should have been taken by surprise by the development of the factory system at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th. If we had sat down, if our ancestors had sat down and tried to foresee what was going to happen, I don't think they would have had to subject millions of human beings to an absolutely infernal life, in what Blake called the dark, satanic mill of the period. If we had used a little imagination and a little good will at the time, I think we could have saved many millions of people from incalculable misery during two or three generations.

And I don't think we have to let ourselves be taken by surprise again. I think we have a large mass of facts, and with a little imagination, we can project these into the future, and we can see fairly clearly what is going to happen, what is likely to happen, provided we don't blow ourselves up in the interval.

It seems to me it is exceedingly important for the hedgehogs, the specialists, to get into contact with the representatives of other, non-scientific specialities and with representatives of the ordinary lay public. And I can imagine a conference upon a much larger scale, not necessarily larger in numbers, but on a more variegated scale, than

the conference going on here today. It would have representatives of various scientific disciplines meeting with representatives from government, from business, from the field of religion, sitting down and trying to imagine (A) what is likely to happen, and (B) what can be done to mitigate the results, which, if left to themselves, I think will be extremely dangerous and extremely undesirable. I think there must be such a conference, there must be a meeting of minds to try to work out some kind of educational policy, some kind of governmental policy, some kind of legal policy in relation to this enormous process of technicization, which has been going on for the last 100 years, which is continuing with mounting acceleration, and which is going to take us goodness knows where within the next fifty years.

And I close, therefore, on this idea: that in such an institution as this, in the University of California, in the medical department or in one of the other departments, there should be a periodic conference of quite different types of people to think about these problems, and as I say, if possible, to work out some means by which we can make the best of both worlds. The best of the purely human world, and the best of this extraordinary, wonderful and terrifying world of technique.

Chapter 27

1960
Letters

Huxley lectured widely this year, at colleges on both coasts and at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka. His growing popularity as a lecturer can probably be attributed both to his unique and charming intelligence, and to his subject matter, of which Visionary Experience was only one compelling topic. Cancer was discovered but quickly destroyed by radium needle treatment There was time for two psychedelic sessions: an LSD experiment in June, in which he contemplated the Hindu and Buddhist interpretations of love (attachment/detachment—"both kinds of nirvana). Then, in November, he and Humphry Osmond journeyed to Cambridge where they met Dr. Timothy heavy and his colleagues who were then conducting large-scale experiments at Harvard (the Psychedelic Research Project). There Huxley took psilocybin for the first time, in a group consisting of five other persons.

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 842]

3276 Deronda Dr.,
L.A. 28, Cal.
17 July, 1960

MY DEAR HUMPHRY,
Thank you for your good letter [….]

Your work with imagers sounds very interesting. Have you any idea why some people visualize and others don't? I don't, except when my temperature touches 103°. Even LSD—at least in 100 μ doses—doesn't make me see things with my eyes shut. I took some LSD 3 or 4 weeks ago and had some interesting experiences of the way in which, as the Indians say, the thought and the thinker and the thing thought about are one—and then of the way in which this unowned experience becomes something belonging to *me;* then no me any more and a kind of *sat chit ananda,* at one moment without *karuna* or charity (how odd that the Vedantists say nothing about Love, whereas the Mahayana Buddhists insist that unless *prajnaparamita* (the wisdom of the other shore) has *karuna* as the reverse of the medal, *nirvana* is, for the

Bodhisattva, no better than hell). And in this experience with LSD, I had an inkling of both kinds of *nirvana*—the loveless being-consciousness-bliss, and the one with love and, above all, a sense that one can never love enough.

I liked the things you said for Dr. Raynor Johnson's chapter on drugs and spiritual experience in his latest book.[1] An interesting book—tho' perhaps he multiplies spiritual entities beyond what is strictly necessary. But perhaps Ockham's razor isn't a valid scientific principle. Perhaps entities sometimes ought to be multiplied beyond the point of the simplest possible explanation. For the world is doubtless far odder and more complex than we ordinarily think.

I hope your administrative difficulties have been resolved and that you are now free to get on with something more interesting. Im glad to hear that the Russians have picked up your [adrenochrome] work.

Ever yours,
Aldous

Chapter 28

1960
The Art of Fiction
ALDOUS HUXLEY

As a subject in the Paris Review's *celebrated series of interviews with great authors, Huxley was asked to comment on the relationship between psychedelic drugs and the creative process, and on the value of the psychological insights the drugs afforded the fiction writer.*

INTERVIEWERS

Do you see any relation between the creative process and the use of such drugs as lysergic acid?

HUXLEY

I don't think there is any generalization one can make on this. Experience has shown that there's an enormous variation in the way people respond to lysergic acid. Some people probably could get direct aesthetic inspiration for painting or poetry out of it. Others I don't think could. For most people it's an extremely significant experience, and I suppose in an indirect way it could help the creative process. But I don't think one can sit down and say, "I want to write a magnificent poem, and so I'm going to take lysergic acid." I don't think it's by any means certain that you would get the result you wanted—you might get almost any result.

INTERVIEWERS

Would the drug give more help to the lyric poet than the novelist?

HUXLEY

Well, the poet would certainly get an extraordinary view of life which he wouldn't have had in any other way, and this might help him a great deal. But, you see (and this is the most significant thing about the experience), during the experience you're really not interested in doing anything practical—even writing lyric poetry. If you were having a love affair with a woman, would you be interested in writing about it? Of course not. And during the experience you're not particularly in words, because the experience transcends words and is quite inexpressible in terms of words. So the whole notion of conceptualizing what is happening seems very silly. *After* the event, it

seems to me quite possible that it might be of great assistance: people would see the universe around them in a very different way and would be inspired, possibly, to write something about it.

INTERVIEWERS

But is there much carry-over from the experience?

HUXLEY

Well, there's always a complete memory of the experience. You remember something extraordinary having happened. And to some extent you can relive the experience, particularly the transformation of the outside world. You get hints of this, you see the world in this transfigured way now and then—not to the same pitch of intensity, but something of the kind. It does help you to look at the world in a new way. And you come to understand very clearly the way that certain specially gifted people have seen the world. You are actually introduced into the kind of world that Van Gogh lived in, or the kind of world that Blake lived in. You begin to have a direct experience of this kind of world while you're under the drug, and afterwards you can remember and to some slight extent recapture this kind of world, which certain privileged people have moved in and out of, as Blake obviously did all the time.

INTERVIEWERS

But the artist's talents won't be any different from what they were before he took the drug?

HUXLEY

I don't see why they should be different. Some experiments have been made to see what painters can do under the influence of the drug, but most of the examples I have seen are very uninteresting. You could never hope to reproduce to the full extent the quite incredible intensity of color that you get under the influence of the drug. Most of the things I have seen are just rather tiresome bits of expressionism, which correspond hardly at all, I would think, to the actual experience. Maybe an immensely gifted artist—someone like Odilon Redon (who probably saw the world like this all the time anyhow)—maybe such a man could profit by the lysergic acid experience, could use his visions as models, could reproduce on canvas the external world as it is transfigured by the drug.

INTERVIEWERS

Here this afternoon, as in your book, *The Doors of Perception,* you've been talking chiefly about the visual experience under the drug, and about painting. Is there any similar gain in psychological insight?

HUXLEY

Yes, I think there is. While one is under the drug one has penetrating insights into the people around one, and also into one's own life. Many people get tremendous recalls of buried material. A process which may take six years of psychoanalysis happens in an hour—and considerably cheaper! And the experience can be very liberating and widening in other ways. It shows that the world one habitually lives in is merely a creation of this conventional, closely conditioned being which one is, and that there are quite other kinds of worlds outside. It's a very salutary thing to realize that the rather dull universe in which most of us spend most of our time is not the only universe there is. I think it's healthy that people should have this experience.

INTERVIEWERS

Could such psychological insight be helpful to the fiction writer?

HUXLEY

I doubt it. After all, fiction is the fruit of sustained effort. The lysergic acid experience is a revelation of something outside of time and the social order. To write fiction, one needs a whole series of inspirations about people in an actual environment, and then a whole lot of hard work on the basis of those inspirations.

INTERVIEWERS

Is there any resemblance between lysergic acid, or mescalin, and the "soma" of your *Brave New World?*

HUXLEY

None whatever. Soma is an imaginary drug, with three different effects—euphoric, hallucinant, or sedative—an impossible combination. Mescalin is the active principle of the peyote cactus, which has been used for a long time by the Indians of the Southwest in their religious rites. It is now synthesized. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) is a chemical compound with effects similar to mescalin; it was developed about twelve years ago, and it is only being used experimentally at present. Mescalin and lysergic acid transfigure the external world and in some cases produce visions. Most people have the sort of positive and enlightening experience I've described; but the visions may be infernal as well as celestial. These drugs are physiologically innocuous, except to people with liver damage. They leave most people with no hangover, and they are not habit-forming. Psychiatrists have found that, skillfully used, they can be very helpful in the treatment of certain kinds of neuroses.

INTERVIEWERS

How did you happen to get involved in experiments with mescalin and lysergic acid?

HUXLEY

Well, I'd been interested in it for some years, and I had been in correspondence with Humphry Osmond, a very gifted young British psychiatrist working in Canada. When he started testing its effects on different kinds of people, I became one of his guinea pigs. I've described all this in *The Doors of Perception.*

Chapter 29

1960
Mushrooms for Lunch
TIMOTHY LEARY

Huxley and Osmond visited Dr. Timothy Leary at Harvard, where the Psychedelic Research Project had gotten underway. Here is Leary's account of his impressions of Huxley upon the occasion of their first meetings in Cambridge.

… George [Littwin] began to talk about the literature on visionary states and asked me if 1 had read Aldous Huxley's books on mescaline, *Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell,* and when I said I hadn't he rushed down the hall to his office and brought them back. Small, thin rectangles. I stuck them in my jacket pockets.

The final issue was the big one. Where would we get the mushrooms? Someone had told me that the Public Health Service had succeeded in synthesizing the mushrooms and I said I'd write to Washington and try to check on that lead. Gerhart [Braun] back in Mexico had told me that he'd continue the search for Juana the witch and if he found her he'd get a large supply and send some up to me. And Frank Barron back in Berkeley had told me that the people at the University of Mexico had cultivated mushrooms and maybe we could get some from them.

That night I read Huxley. And then I read those two books again. And again. It was all there. All my vision. And more too. Huxley had taken mescaline in a garden and shucked off the mind and awakened to eternity.

About a week later someone at a party told me that Aldous Huxley was spending the fall in town and that sounded like a good omen, so I sat down and wrote him a letter.

Two days later, during one of our planning conferences, Mr. Huxley telephoned to say he was interested and lunch was arranged.

Aldous Huxley was staying in a new M.I.T. apartment overlooking the Charles River. He answered the bell—tall, pale, frail—joined me, and we drove to the Harvard Faculty Club. He read the menu slowly through his magnifying glass. I asked him if he wanted soup and he asked what kind and I looked at the menu and it was mushroom soup

so we laughed and we had mushrooms for lunch.

Aldous Huxley: stooped, towering, gray Buddha. A wise and good man. Head like a multi-lingual encyclopedia. Voice elegant and chuckling except when the pitch rose in momentary amused indignation about over-population or the pomposity of psychiatrists.

We talked about how to study and use the consciousness-expanding drugs and we clicked along agreeably on the do's and the not-to-do's. We would avoid the behaviorist approach to others' awareness. Avoid labeling or depersonalizing the subject. We should not impose our own jargon or our own experimental games on others. We were not out to discover new laws, which is to say, to discover the redundant implications of our own premises. We were not to be limited by the pathological point of view. We were not to interpret ecstasy as mania, or calm serenity as catatonia; we were not to diagnose Buddha as a detached schizoid; nor Christ as an exhibitionistic masochist; nor the mystic experience as a symptom; nor the visionary state as a model psychosis. Aldous Huxley chuckling away with compassionate humor at human folly.

And with such erudition! Moving back and forth in history, quoting the mystics. Wordsworth. Plotinus. The Areopagite. William James. Ranging from the esoteric past, back to the biochemical present: Humphry Osmond curing alcoholics in Saskatchewan with LSD; Keith Ditman's plans to clean out Skid Row in Los Angeles with LSD; Roger Heim taking his bag of Mexican mushrooms to the Parisian chemists who couldn't isolate the active ingredient, and then going to Albert Hofmann the great Swiss, who did it and called it psilocybin. They had sent the pills back to the *curandera* in Oaxaca state and she tried them and had divinatory visions and was happy that her practice could now be year-round and not restricted to the three rainy mushroom months.

Aldous Huxley was shrewdly aware of the political complications and the expected opposition from the Murugans, the name he gave to power people in his novel, *Island.*

"Dope … Murugan was telling me about the fungi that are used here as a source of dope."

"What's in a name? . . . Answer, practically everything. Murugan calls it dope and feels about it all the disapproval that, by conditioned reflex, the dirty word evokes. We on the contrary, give the stuff good names—the moksha *medicine, the reality revealer, the truth-and-beauty pill. And we know, by direct experience, that the good names are deserved. Whereas our young friend here has no firsthand knowledge of the stuff and can't be persuaded even to give it a try. For him it's dope and dope is something that, by definition, no decent person ever in-dulges in."*

Aldous Huxley advised and counseled and joked and told stories and

we listened and our research project was shaped accordingly. Huxley offered to sit in on our planning meetings and was ready to take mushrooms with us when the research was under way.

From these meetings grew the design for a naturalistic pilot study, in which the subjects would be treated like astronauts—carefully prepared, briefed with all available facts, and then expected to run their own spacecraft, make their own observations, and report back to ground control. Our subjects were not passive patients but hero-explorers.

During the weeks of October and November of 1960 there were many meetings to plan the research. Aldous Huxley would come and listen and then close his eyes and detach himself from the scene and go into his controlled meditation trance, which was unnerving to some of the Harvard people who equate consciousness with talk, and then he would open his eyes and make a diamond-pure comment… .

Chapter 30

1960
Harvard Session Report

Huxley and Osmond visited Dr. Timothy Leary at Harvard where the Psychedelic Research Project had gotten underway. The following report of a psilocybin session from unpublished laboratory notes exhibits the methodology of the Harvard researchers, and reveals Huxley as a semi-anonymous subject in a group experiment.

DATE: Sunday, Nov. 6, 1960.

SITUATION:

At this session the remaining members of the research group were exposed to the psilocybin experience. The session began at noon on Sunday and lasted until 8 p.m. The scene was, as in the preceding, the large and comfortable home of the principal investigator.

PARTICIPANTS:

#1, 4: from previous sessions.

#11 : Mr. Aldous Huxley.

#12: 20-year-old woman, wife of #3. She is worrying, rather immature girl who had built up extravagant expectations (and fears) about participating with older and more distinguished persons whom she respected.

#13: A brilliant graduate student in psychology, age 27, a tense, energetic person who had been in a state of anticipatory panic for two weeks before the experience.

#14: A college graduate of 25, the wife of #6 who had been peripherally involved in visionary matters since her husband had been involved in mescaline research the preceding year.

DOSAGE:

1 took 10 mg at the start and followed it by 10 mg additional after 40 minutes.

#4, same dosage as above.

#11, took 10 mg at beginning and no more.

#12, same dosage as #1 and #4; this was clearly an over-dose. This person (110 libs.) had an intestinal disorder the

preceding day, was menstruating and was in addition not as resilient and "strong" emotionally as any preceding participant.

#13, same dosage as #1, 4 and 12, totaling 20 mg.

#14, same dosage as above.

RESULTS:

#1 experienced the classic phenomena, visual intensification, vedantic calm, philosophic unifying experiences centering around the issues raised by the group activity—i.e., centering around domesticity and duty. This participant was forced to take over executive activities during six of the eight hours and was able to function more successfully than usual in handling routine social decisions which arose; claimed lasting insights into ethical and philosophic matters.

#4 sat calmly for five hours, euphoric, closely observing and empathizing with events around her; was able to exert almost complete control in spite of 20 mg dosage.

#11 sat in contemplative calm throughout; occasionally produced relevant epigrams; reported experience as an edifying philosophic experience.

#12 silly euphoria; felt rather isolated because other participants were sitting quietly in meditation; after additional 10 mg became depressed, wept, focused on personal problems; while experience was painful she brought to the surface problems which she has subsequently been able to deal with and think through.

[remainder of report missing]

Chapter 31

1961
Letters

In May of this year a brushfire completely destroyed the Huxleys' Deronda Drive house, including his 4000-volume library and all of his manuscripts with the exception of the nearly-completed Island, *which he rescued from the flames and finished a few weeks later. "It's odd to be starting from scratch at my age," he wrote regarding the fire. He delivered three major lectures in* 1961: *at a conference on mind control in San Francisco, at the annual parapsychology conference in France, and at an international conference for applied psychology in Denmark. He gave his longest interview—covering two entire afternoons—to a* BBC *commentator in London. He met with Dr. Albert Hofmann in Switzerland, and journeyed to India for the first time since the 1920S.*

His letters to Dr. Timothy Leary display his continuing interest in visionary art, as well as "the hopelessness of the scientific (e.g., Pavlovian) approach" which views changed behavior negatively. His often expressed caution against dramatizing or glamorizing psychedelic drugs in the mass media is reiterated in a letter to Osmond.

TO DR. TIMOTHY LEARY [1]

3276 Deronda Drive,
Los Angeles 28, Calif.
6 February, 1961

DEAR TIM,

Thank you for your letter of Jan. 23rd, which came during my absence—first in Hawaii, then at San Francisco (where we had a good conference on *Control of the Mind.*

Alas, I *can't* write anything for Harpers—am too desperately busy trying to finish a book.

At S. F. I met Dr. [Oscar] Janiger, whom I had not seen for several years. He tells me that he has given LSD to 100 painters who have done pictures before, during & after the drug, & whose efforts are being appraised by a panel of art critics. This might be interesting. I

gave him your address, & I think you will hear from him.

I also spoke briefly with Dr. Joly West (prof, of psychiatry at U. of Oklahoma Medical School), who told me that he had done a lot of work in sensory deprivation, using improved versions of John Lilly's techniques. Interesting visionary results—but I didn't have time to hear the details.

You are right about the hopelessness of the "scientific" approach. Those idiots want to be Pavlovians not Lorenzian Ethnologists. Pavlov never saw an animal in its natural state, only under duress. The "scientific" LSD boys do the same with their subjects. No wonder they report psychoses.

Yours,
Aldous

TO DR. TIMOTHY LEARY [SMITH 861]

The Plaza,
Fifth Avenue at 59th Street, New York
13 April, 1961

DEAR TIM,

Next time you are in New York, go and see the Max Ernst show at the Museum of Modern Art. Some of the pictures are wonderful examples of the world as seen from the vantage point of LSD or mushrooms. Ernst sees in a visionary way and is also a first-rate artist capable of expressing what he sees in paintings which are about as adequate to the visionary facts as any I know. It might be interesting to get in touch with him, find out what his normal state is, and then give him mushrooms or LSD and get him to compare his normal experiences with his drug-induced ones. His combination of psychological idiosyncrasy and enormous talent makes him a uniquely valuable case.

Yours,
Aldous

Chapter 32

1961
London Interview
ALDOUS HUXLEY

During a summer in London Huxley granted his longest interview (it covered two entire afternoons) to John Chandos. Portions of it are quoted in Bedford, including the following extracts pertaining to psychedelic drugs.

"How often have you taken mescalin?"

"I've taken mescalin twice, and LSD about five times, I suppose." [1]

"Is the effect the same on everyone?"

"It varies. On the whole, no. Statistically about 70% get a good and positive and happy result from it, a certain percentage get no results, and a certain percentage get very unpleasant and hell-like results out of it. They get very frightened."

"And what were yours?"

"Mine were always positive …"

"How long does the effect last?"

"Eight hours."

"During this time, do you just sit, or do you move about?"

"You move about if you want to … You spend a lot of time sitting quietly looking at things—getting some of these strange metaphysical insights into the world… ."

"Is it a habit-forming drug?"

"No, no, absolutely not… . Most people I know haven't any special desire to go on taking it. They would like to take it every six months or every year or something of this kind… ."

"Is it not a condition one wants to be in, or continue to be in?"

"You couldn't be in it all the time… . The world becomes so extraordinary and so absorbing that you can't cross the street without considerable risk of being run over… ."

"But if this vision is so valuable, doesn't one want to go on…?"

"Well, I would like to take it about once a year. Most people … who have taken it have no desire to sort of fool with it constantly… . You take it too seriously to behave in this way towards it. You don't want to wallow in it."

"Would it be wallowing if it opened up a life …?"

“Well, you need a good deal of time to digest this, I think… .”

Chapter 33

1961
Visionary Experience

ALDOUS HUXLEY

The following lecture, delivered to an international gathering of psychologists, is perhaps the most systematic of the many talks Huxley gave on this subject. The question, "Why are precious stones precious?" came to function as a Zen koan whenever he lectured on this subject. He covers methods of access to the Visionary World, the characteristics of the experience, and its value in religion, folklore, and the arts. His remarks on chemical access now include reference to the recent synthesis of psilocybin. A similar address given by Huxley in the fall of I960 at M.I.T. was recorded on a long-playing record ("A Series of Talks on the Human Situation," Vol. II). Huxley also delivered this lecture to scientists at Los Almos in May, 1962.

MR. CHAIRMAN, ladies and gentlemen, I feel a little dubious about being here in a group of distinguished scientists. However, I console myself by the thought that the people in my profession have been occupied with the problems of psychology for three or four thousand years before your profession was invented. You have, of course, systematized what people in the literary field have seen in a rather vague and intuitive and spasmodic way, and of course we in our turn can learn a great deal from you.

My excuse for being here, really, can be summed up in the phrase of Alexander Pope that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Amid so many academic angels who are of course completely inhibited by their surroundings, by their intellectual vested interests, by their Ph.D.s, it is very important, I think, that there should break in, every now and then, a literary fool who is not inhibited in any of these ways and who does start ranging about over this immense field and is not afraid of making a fool of himself, or of getting into some kind of academic trouble. I think that in spite of the fact that the literary man cannot contribute anything of solid scientific interest, he may nevertheless be of some value inasmuch as he does explore areas of this fantastic universe of the human mind, which the more cautious academic psychologist is rather nervous of getting into. And with this brief introduction let me get on to this fascinating subject of Visionary

Experience.

WHY ARE PRECIOUS STONES PRECIOUS?

Well, I shall begin by asking one of those questions which children ask of their parents and which leaves them completely stumped—a question like Why is grass green? This question is: Why are precious stones precious? It is very peculiar, when you think of the subject: Why should human beings have spent an immense amount of time, energy and money in collecting coloured pebbles? There is no conceivable economic value in this and they are rather pretty in their way, but it seems very strange that this enormous amount of energy should have been put forth on the collection of precious stones, and also that such an immense mythology and folklore, as has arisen and has been crystallized around precious stones, should have ever come into existence.

Why should precious stones have always been regarded as extremely precious? Well, this question was asked some fifty years ago by the distinguished American philosopher, George Santayana, and he came up with this answer. He said, I think, that they are precious because, of all objects in this world of transience, this world of perpetual perishing, they seem to be the nearest to absolute permanence; they give us, so to say, a kind of visible image of eternity or unchangeableness. Well, I think there is something in this answer, but I don't think it is by any means the whole answer to our problem. It is important because it seems to go back to some deep psychological factor in the mind, but I don't think it goes back far enough; I don't think it goes to the most important psychological factor, which determines the preciousness of precious stones. And here I shall quote from another philosopher of antiquity, Plotinus, the great neoplatonic philosopher, who in a very interesting and profoundly significant passage says, "In the intelligible world, which is the world of platonic ideas, everything shines; consequently, the most beautiful thing in our world is fire."

This remark is significant in several ways. First of all, it interests me profoundly as showing that a great metaphysical structure, the platonic and ncoplatonic structure, was essentially built up on a quasi-sensory experience. The world of Ideas shines, it is a world which can be seen; and this curious fact that the ideal world can actually be seen, can be discovered also in Plato himself. In the *Phaedo,* Socrates speaks about the posthumous world to which good men go after they are dead, and it is rather difficult from the dialogue itself to make out whether this is simply a paradise world, or whether it is also in a sense the world of Ideas. But anyhow, what Socrates says about this

world—which he calls the other earth—is again that in this other earth everything shines, that the very stones of the road and on the mountains have the quality of precious stones; and he ends up by saying that the precious stones of our earth, our highly valued emeralds, rubies, and so on, are but infinitesimal fragments of the stones which are to be seen in this other earth; and this other earth, where everything is brighter and clearer and more real than in our world is, he says, a vision of blessed beholders. Well, here again is another indication that a great metaphysical idea, the platonic Idea, the platonic system of an ideal world, is also based upon a world of vision. It is a vision of blessed beholders, and I think we now begin to see why precious stones are precious: they are precious because in some way they remind us of something which is already there in our minds. They remind us of this paradisal, more-than-real world which sometimes is glimpsed consciously by some people and which I think most people have had slight glimpses of, and which we are all, in some obscure way, aware of on an unconscious level. And as Plotinus says, it is because of the existence of this other world, this luminous other world, that the most beautiful thing on earth is fire.

Now it is an interesting fact that we will speak about diamonds having fire, that the most precious, most valuable diamonds are those with the greatest amount of fire, and the whole art of cutting diamonds is of course the art of making them as brilliant as possible and making them show off the greatest amount of fire within. And indeed it can be said that all precious stones are in a sense crystallized fire. It is very significant in this context that we find in the *Book of Ezekiel,* when he is describing the Garden of Eden, he says it is full of stones of fire—which are simply precious stones—so that we see, I think quite definitely, that the reason why precious stones are precious is precisely this, that they remind us of this strange other world at the back of our heads to which some people can obtain access, and to which some people are given access spontaneously.

ACCESS TO THE VISIONARY WORLD

Spontaneous Access • Before I go on to talk about the actual nature of this internal visionary world, let me say a little about the means of access to that world. Some people spontaneously go there; they seem to be able to move back and forth without any difficulty between the visionary world and the workaday, biologically useful world of our ordinary experience. You get people, for example, like William Blake, who is constantly moving back and forth between the two worlds. Blake had a period in middle life when he was unable to visit the visionary world. For about twenty years he didn't see it. He used to

see it in his youth, and then again in his old age he was able to go into it quite freely. And we have, I think, plenty of cases of poets and artists who have gone back and forth from one world to another. There are very beautiful and very detailed descriptions of the visionary world given to the Irish poet, George Russell—who wrote under the name of A.E.—where he describes his own experiences of going back and forth into this luminous world within the mind.

There are these spontaneous cases where a privileged few are able to visit the other world and come back again safe and sound. Then I think we can also say that, in a very large number of children—I don't know what the proportion is; I don't think it has ever been systematically investigated—but in a good number of children, there is this capacity to live in a kind of visionary world. They see both within and without this transfigured luminous world. It is of course the world described by Wordsworth in his famous *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.* I think a great many children have exactly the kind of intimations of immortality which Wordsworth described. Then in due course, as they are subjected to our system of analytical and conceptual education, they lose the capacity of seeing this other world which gradually, in Wordsworth's words, "fades into the light of common day." From having lived in a world which had "the glory and the freshness of a dream," they return to this rather boring, rather drab world in which most of us pass our lives. I would say, in passing, that one of the major problems of education is how do we help children to make the best of both worlds? How do we help them to make the best of the world of primary experience (and of this extension of primary experience: visionary experience) and at the same time help them to make the best of the world of language and the best of the world of concepts and general ideas? At present our system of education seems almost a guarantee that while we teach them how to use words and concepts, we wipe out this other world of beauty and higher reality which so many children live in.

These are two cases of spontaneous awareness of the other world, of the visionary world. Another class of people who have this awareness spontaneously is the class of the dying. Readers of Tolstoy will remember in that extraordinary story *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch,* that at the end of his unutterable sufferings and miseries, this wretched man feels that he is being pushed into a black sack, deeper and deeper, and suddenly, within a few hours before he dies, he perceives that the bottom of the sack is open and at the end of it is a light.

This is not merely a literary invention. In recent months Dr. Karlis Osis,[1] of the Parapsychology Foundation of New York, has been sending out questionnaires to a large number of doctors and nurses

getting them to give reports of the state of mind of patients on their deathbed. The interesting thing is that he has, I think, about 800 answers from doctors and nurses who report that, spontaneously, patients on the verge of death did have these tremendous visionary experiences of light, of luminous figures. It is a most interesting fact to find that this phenomenon, which has been reported of course in literature in the past, is now statistically confirmed. This is one of the most fascinating things that professional psychologists are doing now. They are confirming, by questionnaires and in the laboratory, all kinds of things which were intuitively known, and known by observation, and recorded in a casual way by literary men and philosophers in the past.

Well, as I say, this represents a third class of spontaneous cases. Now we have to go on to the induced cases.

Induced Access • The fact that visionary experience has always, at all times and everywhere been very highly valued, means that at all times and in all cultures systematic efforts have been made to induce this experience.

The experience can be induced in a variety of ways. Let us quickly go through a few of them.

One method is hypnosis. Under deep hypnosis a certain number of people (not very many, but I have seen a few) do evidently enter this world and report very strange and interesting happenings: they see figures, they see luminous landscapes, and so on. These are not very common phenomena, but it is interesting to know that there are a certain number of people who can be transported into this other world by hypnosis.

There are other psychological methods for getting into the other world, and one of the best known in the Orient of course is the method of one-pointed concentration, the traditional Yoga method of excluding everything except one particular point on which the attention is concentrated. This in many cases does seem to result in breaking through the barrier surrounding our ordinary, day-to-day, biologically utilitarian world of consciousness, and breaking through into another mode of consciousness, the visionary mode. There is yet another method which has been practised, of course, within all the great religious traditions, the method of what is now called sensory deprivation, or the limited environment. Here again it is most interesting to find professional psychologists repeating, in the laboratory, work which was done for metaphysical and religious reasons by hermits and saints living in caves in the mountains or in the desert. It is a very extraordinary fact that when we do limit the number of external stimuli or cut them out altogether, as can be done

with some difficulty, then in a relatively short time the mind starts producing tremendous visionary experiences. Historically we see such figures as Saint Anthony and the monks of the Thebaid in the fourth century in the Egyption desert, and we see again the hermits of the Himalayas, the Tibetan and the Hindu hermits who lived in complete isolation in the caves. For example, if you read the life of Milarepa, the great Tibetan hermit, or if you read the lives of St. Anthony and St. Paul, the hermit in the Christian tradition, you can see that this isolation did in fact produce visionary experiences. And it is interesting, as I say, to see these facts confirmed by such contemporary workers as D. O. Hebb at McGill in Canada, or my friend Dr. John Lilly at the National Institute of Health in Washington. Lilly has probably gone further than anyone else in creating a limited environment. He immerses himself in a bath at the temperature of 96, has himself fastened into a harness so that he can hardly move, breathes only through a snorkel so that even his face is covered with water and there is no differentiation of sensation on any part of his body, and within three or four hours he is having tremendous visionary experiences. Now the interesting thing is that like St. Anthony's, most of these visionary experiences are extraordinarily unpleasant, and I have asked Dr. Lilly to describe these experiences but he would never tell me exactly what they were, except that they were very, very unpleasant indeed. St. Anthony, as anybody who has ever visited any picture gallery knows, was also subjected to extremely unpleasant experiences, but he occasionally evidently had genuine mystical and divine experiences. It is interesting too that, in all the religious traditions, deserts and places where there is a minimum of sensory stimulation have always been regarded in an ambivalent way, first of all as the places where God is nearest and secondly as the place where devils abound. We find in the New Testament, for example, that the devils who are cast out by Jesus go into the desert because this is the natural place, the habitat, of devils. But again, hermits who lived in the deserts in the fourth century say they went there because this is the place where one can get nearer to God than anywhere else. As I say, it is extremely interesting to find that these ancient religious practices can be and have been confirmed in the laboratory of modern psychological workers.

Another method of getting into the other world is the method of systematic breathing. Breathing exercises were of course developed most systematically in India, and we find traces of them in the Western tradition, particularly in the Greek Orthodox Church tradition where people did evidently employ some breathing methods, and even in individual Western mystics. I am thinking of Father Surin, the French seventeenth-century Jesuit, who speaks about the different

modes of breathing, though he doesn't exactly describe what they were. The significant fact about breathing is that I think one can say that all these elaborate breathing exercises tend to end up in prolonged suspensions of breath. A prolonged suspension of breath necessarily means a growing concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood. Again, it is well known that high concentrations of carbon dioxide do produce very remarkable and startling visionary experiences in the mind, so that we see here, in an empirical way, that people in all the religious traditions of the past made use of methods for changing the body chemistry, in such a way that visionary experiences would become facilitated. This again is the physiological reason, not the metaphysical or the ethical reason, for such practices as fasting.

Fasting has been employed in virtually all the cultural traditions, among other things for the purpose of inducing visions. For example, in a primitive Indian society in America this was a regular part of the initiation of the adolescent young men. They went out into the forest or into the prairie and fasted until they got a vision of the god they were looking for, and in due course they always did get a vision. The methods of fasting of course have been used in every religious tradition. These psychological effects of fasting have been confirmed in the large study by Keys called *The Biology of Human Starvation.*[2] There is a most elaborate description of what happens after a long period of abstention from food, and among the things that happen are these visionary experiences. We know too that the inadequate amounts of vitamins as well as merely inadequate amounts of calories also produce profound psychological changes. There are profound psychological changes in pellagra, for example, and in beriberi. Here again it is interesting, with the knowledge that we now have, to look back over history and to see why a period like the Middle Ages was probably far more fruitful in vision than a period of the present time. The reason very simply is that we are simply stuffed with vitamins and they were not. After all, every winter in the Middle Ages there was a period of extreme vitamin deficiency: pellagra and the other deficiency diseases were very common. On top of a long period of involuntary fasting came the forty days of Lent where voluntary fasting was imposed upon involuntary fasting, so that by the time Easter came around, the mind was completely ready for any kind of vision. I think there is no doubt that this is one of the reasons why spontaneous visionary experiences are a good deal less common now than they were; it is simply a dietary factor. In the past, in earlier civilization, a rather deficient diet tended to make certain types of visionary experiences possible, whereas now our very full diet tends to block them off.

Among other methods of transporting the mind to the other world was the deprivation of sleep. You find this in all the religious traditions: the sleep is reduced and the mind is made open and ripe for visionary experience. Here again it is interesting to see the professional psychologist confirming the findings of the past. My friend Dr. J. West a year or two ago had the occasion to supervise the sleeplessness period of a man who was a disc jockey on an American radio station. For a bet he had resolved to go without sleep for I forget how many days, ten or twelve days. Dr. West supervised this and he told me that it was very interesting, after about seven or eight days, how this man was living in a completely visionary world with brcakings-in of every kind of strange visions, some horrible and some rather beautiful. So here again we see an interesting confirmation of old empirical findings, in the modern laboratory.

Even the medieval habit of austerities or self-imposed punishment was probably also extremely conducive to visions. Self-flagellation, for example: if you analyse what the effects of this sort of proceeding were, it is quite clear that they all made for visionary experiences. They first of all released a great deal of adrenalin, a great deal of histamine, both of which have very strange effects on the mind, and then in the Middle Ages, when neither soaps nor antiseptics existed, any wound which could fester, did fester, and the breakdown products of protein got into the bloodstream. We also know that these things do have very strange and interesting psychological effects. In confirmation of this it is very curious to read of the remark by the great French nineteenth-century Curé d'Ars (and now canonized as Saint Jean Vianney) who was forbidden by his bishop to indulge in the extremely severe austerities, the self-beatings which he had practised as a young man, and he said nostalgically, "When I was allowed to do what I liked with my body, God would refuse me nothing." This is a very interesting psychological statement, that evidently there are psychological reactions on the biochemical level which, connected with this kind of self-torture, do tend towards the production of visions.

Chemical Access • Let us now pass into a final class of vision-inducing procedures; these have to do with the ingestion of various chemicals. Now as the French anthropologist Philippe de Félice showed some twenty years ago in his book *Poisons Sacrés, Ivresses Divines,*[3] virtually in every religious tradition, both civilized and primitive, use has been made of mind-changing drugs used for the purposes of inducing visionary experiences. Every kind of chemical substance has been used for this purpose. The most anciently recorded, I suppose, is the *soma* of the Indians. Nobody knows, I think, what the plant soma was. It has

been identified as the *Asclepias* or milkweed, but the description in the sacred text don't seem to fit in with the milkweed identification. From the ancient text it seems that this was a creeping plant which the Aryan invaders of India in 1,000 B.C. brought down with them from Central Asia, and it became more and more difficult to get hold of the plant as they penetrated further and further into India. Philippe de Félice has a very interesting hypothesis that the development of Yoga (which evidently took place about this time, although it may have started earlier with the pre-Aryan people in India). The taking over of Yoga by the Aryan invaders may have been forced upon them by the fact that it was impossible for them to obtain supplies of soma so that, as they couldn't induce visions by biochemical means, they were forced to resort to purely psychological and breathing exercises to get to the same place. It is an interesting hypothesis which may perhaps be true. I don't know. Then among the other drugs, which of course have been used in the past, are such extremely dangerous mind-changing drugs as opium and as coca, from which cocaine is derived, and such relatively dangerous drugs as hashish—and, after all, our dear old friend alcohol, which was used by the Greeks, later by the Persians, and used by the Celts in Europe as a mind-changing drug and worshipped as a god. This is the interesting thing: the substance which produces the change of mind is regarded as divine and is then hypostatised as a person projected into the external universe as a divine person. We get the same phenomenon in Central America where recently the archaeologists have dug up in the highlands of Guatemala a large number of small stone figures which represent mushrooms out of whose stem emerges the head of a god. It is a very significant fact that this mind-changing mushroom which, as we shall see in a moment, has now entered European life, was actually hypostatised as a diety.

The Mushroom Access • Among the more harmless mind-changing drugs used by people in their religious rites in the past are peyote, the Mexican cactus, which is used in the Southwestern states of America and over large parts of Mexico, then the banisterio [*Bannisteriopsis caapi*] of South America, and now of course the Mexican mushroom.

In modern times pharmacology has produced, partly by more refined methods of extraction and partly by methods of synthesis, a number of mind-changing drugs of extraordinary power, but remarkable for the fact that they have very little harmful effect upon the body. Peyote, among the natural drugs, has almost no harmful effect upon the body; it is not addictive, and Indians 80 years old take no more of the drug than they did when they were young, nor do they feel any desire to take it more frequently than once every month or six

weeks when the religious rites take place. The extract from peyote which is the active principle, and which is now synthesized, mescaline, has the same qualities. Among the more recent additions to the armamentarium of the pharmacologists, the psychopharmacologists, are LSD-25 (lysergic acid diethylamide) which was synthesized by Dr. Albert Hofmann of Basel in 1943, and more recently psilocybin (about which we shall hear tonight, I hope, from Dr. Leary) which was synthesized I think not more than 2 or 3 years ago, also by Dr. Hofmann, who began by extracting the active principles of the Mexican mushroom which had been brought back by Professor Heim from his expedition to Mexico with Mr. Gordon Wasson.[4] I recently had the interesting experience of reading a letter which Professor Heim had written to my brother and which said, "I have just come back from Mexico and as a great triumph I took with me a number of Hofmann's capsules of psilocybin and I gave a dose to the old lady—the curandera, the medicine woman—with whom we had originally done our experiments with the mushrooms—and she was quite delighted because the effects were exactly the same as the mushrooms and she said, "Now I can do my magic all the year round, I don't have to wait for the mushroom season!" So this perhaps is one of the great triumphs of modern science, that one of these days perhaps Professor Hofmann at Basel will receive a telegram saying, "Please airmail one hundred caspules to Southern Mexico, have very important magic to perform next week"—and the capsules will go and the magic will be performed.

These biochemical methods are, I suppose, the most powerful and the most foolproof, so to say, of all the methods for transporting us to this other world that at present exist. I think, as Professor Leary will point out tonight, that there is here a very large field for systematic experimentation by psychologists, because it is now possible to explore areas of the mind at a minimum expense to the body, areas which were almost impossible to get at before, except either by the use of extremely dangerous drugs or else by looking around for the rather rare people who spontaneously can go into this world. (Of course it is very difficult for them to go in on demand, "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth," we can never be sure that the people with the spontaneous gift of visionary experience will have it on demand.) With such drugs as psilocybin it is possible for the majority of people to go into this other world with very little trouble and with almost no harm to themselves.

THE NATURE OF VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

Having discussed the means of access to this world of visionary

experience, let me begin to talk about the nature of the world. What is the nature of visionary experience?

Light • The highest common factor, I think, in all these experiences is the factor of light. There can be both negative, bad light, and good light. In *Paradise Lost,* Milton talks about the illumination of hell which he says is darkness visible. This I think is probably a very good psychological description of the kind of sinister light which sometimes visionaries do see, and it is a light which I think many schizophrenics see. In Dr. Séchehaye's volume *Journal d'une Schizophrène,*[5] her patient describes precisely this appalling light which she lives in: it is a kind of hellish light, it is a light like the glare inside a factory, the hideous glare of modern electric lighting gleaming upon machines. But on the other hand, those who go into a positive experience say this light is of incredible beauty and significance.

The light experience on the positive side may be divided, I think, into two main types. There is the experience of what may be called undifferentiated light, an experience just of light, of everything being flooded with light. And there is the experience of differentiated light, that is to say of objects, of people, of landscapes which seem to be impregnated and shining with their own light.

In general I think it is possible to say that the experience of undifferentiated light tends to be the experience associated with the fullblown mystical experience. The mystical experience, I think, may be defined in a rather simple way as the experience in which the subject-object relationship is transcended, in which there is a sense of complete solidarity of the subject with other human beings and with the universe in general. There is also a sense of what may be called the ultimate All-Rightness of the universe, the fact that in spite of pain, in spite of death, in spite of all the horrors which go on all around us, this universe somehow is all right, and there is a direct understanding of such phrases as we find, for example, in the Book *of Job,* phrases which in our ordinary state we certainly cannot understand. I mean when Job says, 'Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him," this is incomprehensible on our ordinary biological level, and yet it becomes perfectly comprehensible on the mystical level, even on the level of induced mysticism.

Then there is another very characteristic psychological feature in the mystical experience: the sense of an intense gratitude, an intense gratitude for the privilege of being alive in a universe as extraordinary as this, as altogether wonderful. Here again one finds phrases in the mystical literature which are completely incomprehensible on the ordinary, everyday, biological level but which become completely comprehensible on the visionary and mystical level. For example,

there is a phrase of William Blake's where he says "Gratitude is Heaven itself." What does this mean? It is very difficult to imagine in our ordinary state of mind, but it becomes perfectly clear in the induced or spontaneous mystical condition: gratitude *is* Heaven itself, gratitude is intense, and the actual experience of gratitude has an uplifting and joyous quality which is beyond all words.

The light experience is of course described again and again in the religious literature. After all, the most celebrated cases, (the light experienced by Saint Paul on the road to Damascus; a tremendous explosion of light which woke Mohammed out of sleep and which made him faint from its intensity; the experience of tremendous light which Plotinus described as having three or four times in his life)—you will find this again and again in literature. And don't let us imagine that these experiences of light are confined only to remarkable and outstanding men and women; they are not. A great many quite ordinary people have had them, and this is one of the great merits of the most recent book of Professor Raynor C. Johnson, the book called *Watcher on the Hills,*[5] where he brings together a great many case-histories of perfectly ordinary people who had this tremendous experience of undifferentiated light. If I may quote from a letter I received recently from an unknown correspondent—this is a woman in her sixties who wrote to the saying that she had had an experience as a school-girl which had affected her throughout her life—she said, "I was a girl of 15 or 16, I was in the kitchen toasting bread for tea and suddenly on a dark November afternoon the whole place was flooded with light, and for a minute by clock time I was immersed in this, and I had a sense that in some unutterable way the universe was all right. This has affected me for the rest of my life, I have lost all fear of death, I have a passion for light, but I am in no way afraid of death, because this light experience has been a kind of conviction to me that everything *is* all right in some way."

These experiences are relatively common; many more people have them than at present let on, I mean we live now in a period when people don't like to talk about these experiences. If you have these experiences, you keep your mouth shut for fear of being told to go to a psychoanalyst. In the past, when visions were regarded as creditable, people talked about them. They did run, of course, a considerable risk because most visions in the past were regarded as being inspired by the devil, but if you had the luck to convince your fellows that your visions were divine, then you achieve a great deal of credit. But now, as I say, the case has altered and people don't like talking about these things. This is the value, I think, of Professor Maslow's recent work on what he calls peak experiences.[6] He is collecting a very large number of cases of this kind of experience, and he reassures his students that

he is not going to regard them as crazy if they tell about these things, and he says it is surprising what a number of them do come out with the fact that they have had these kinds of experiences.

So much for the undifferentiated light, and here let me point out an interesting fact. I think one can say that in all the religions, both primitive and developed, light is the sort of predominant divine symbol, but the interesting fact is that this symbol is based upon a psychological fact, that the light of the world, the inner light, enlightenment, the clear light of the void in the Buddhist literature, all these are symbols. But they are also psychological facts. Just as the great metaphysical systems—so it seems to me—take their origin in many cases from psychological experiences, so again do we see these great primary symbols of religious life also take their origin from psychological experiences. This quasi-sensory experience of light is something which has run through many, I think one can say all, religions and has become, as I say, the primary symbol.

Now from undifferentiated light we pass to differentiated light, that is to say, light contained in objects, shining out of things and people. Well, on its simplest level this is a kind of luminous living geometry. There is something rather interesting here. I think here again we can say that certain symbols are based on psychological facts. For example the mandalas of India, about which the late Dr. Jung was so keen, these too are based I think on psychological facts. In what may be called the early stages of the visionary experience, people do see with the closed eyes things which are exactly like mandalas. These great symbolic constructs are again based upon immediate psychological experiences.

Beyond these, of course, there are all kinds of more realistic, naturalistic visionary experiences—experiences of architectures, of landscapes, of figures. It is interesting to find that again and again in the accounts given by people of visionary experiences, we find the same elements described, for example, in Heinrich Klüver's book on peyote where he sums up most of the material which had been published up to the time he wrote it.[7] "We find again and again this description of luminous landscapes and architectures encrusted with gems. The doors and windows are surrounded by gems, the whole world of landscape is filled with what Ezekiel calls the stones of fire. These descriptions of course very closely parallel all the accounts of paradises, posthumous worlds and fairylands which are found in all the traditions of the world. We shall go into this further later, but I think it is important to point out that here again there is a psychological basis to a great deal of material which is to be found in the traditional literature of religion and folklore.

Visionary Figures • We come now to the visionary figures. These also occur, and here again there is a very curious and interesting fact which has been recorded again and again in the literature both of spontaneous experiences and induced experiences, that when a figure is seen, it virtually never has a face which we recognize. Our fathers and mothers and wives and children do not appear. What we see is a complete stranger.

Here again I think this fact accounts for some interesting theological speculations. For example, angels are not, as now theoretically supposed, the departed spirits of the dead; they belong to another species altogether. This exactly confirms what the psychologists have found in relation to induced or spontaneous experiences; these are always figures of strangers.

When one starts to think about the neurology and the psychology of this state of affairs, it is most extraordinary that there is something in our brain/mind, some part of our brain/mind, which uses the memories of visual experiences and recombines them in such a way as to present to the consciousness something absolutely novel, which has nothing to do with our private life and very little to do, as far as one can see, with the life of humanity in general. Personally I find it extremely comforting to think that I have somewhere at the back of my skull something which is absolutely indifferent to me and even absolutely indifferent to the human race. I think this is something very satisfying, that there is an area of the mind which doesn't care about what I am doing, but which is concerned with something quite, quite different. And why this should be and what the neurological basis is, I cannot imagine, but this is something which I think requires investigation.

Transfigurations • Now we come to another aspect of differentiated light which may be described as the spilling out from the interior world into the exterior world. There is a kind of visionary experience which people have with the eyes open and which consists in a transfiguration of the external world so that it seems overwhelmingly beautiful and alive and shining. This of course is what Wordsworth described so beautifully and so accurately in his great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality,* and similar experiences can be found in the works of the mystics, in the work of the Anglican mystic, Traherne, who gives an incredibly beautiful description of the kind of transfigured world in which he lived in childhood. This description ends up with the most beautiful passage where he describes this wonderful world, and he says, "And so with much ado I was taught the dirty devices of the world which now I unlearn and become as a little child again so that I now enter once more the Kingdom of God."

And here, as I said before, here is surely one of the great challenges to modern education: How do we keep alive this world of immense value which people have had during childhood and which certain privileged people retain throughout their lives? How do we keep this alive and at the same time impart a sufficient amount of conceptual education to make them efficient citizens and scientists? This I don't know, but I am absolutely certain that *this* is one of the important challenges confronting modern education.

This transfigured external vision is very important in relation to art. By no means is all art visionary art; there is wonderful art which is essentially not visionary art. But there is also wonderful art which is essentially visionary art, which is the product either of the artist's vision, so to say with the eyes closed, of what is happening inside his head, this extraordinary other world; or else a vision of the external world transfigured either for the good or for the evil. In the works of Van Gogh, for example, one can find extraordinary examples of both negative and positive transfiguration. One can see in the same exhibition two pictures, one of which quite clearly is the most blissful picture of the most blissful experience of a positively transfigured world, and next to it will be a picture which is absolutely terrifying in its sinisterness, where he has perceived the world as indeed transfigured, but transfigured in a purely diabolic way. One can understand the sufferings of this unfortunate man who could be precipitated out of a real paradise into something absolutely infernal, and it is not surprising that he ended up as a suicide. When one sees a large collection of his pictures it is quite easy to trace the ups and downs of his extraordinary experience, both of positive and of negative transfiguration.

VISIONARY EXPERIENCE, RELIGION AND FOLKLORE

Now very briefly let us touch on some of the significances of visionary experience for religion and folklore. One finds, in all the traditions, descriptions of paradise, of the golden age, of the future life, which one places side by side with the descriptions of visionary experience, either spontaneous or induced, and sees that they are exactly the same; that the world described in popular religion, these other worlds, are simply descriptions of visionary experiences that men have projected from the inside into the universe. In all the traditions we find the same confusion of gems, and where gems are not used we find glass which, of course, was regarded as a very precious and strange material in the past. We find this in the *Book of Revelation,* a sea of glass in the New Jerusalem, the walls of which were gold and yet transparent, a kind of gold and transparent glass,

and we find the same emphasis on glass as a marvelous magical material in the Northern traditions. We find it in the Celtic tradition, in the Welsh tradition; for example the home of the dead is called Ynisvitrin, the Isle of Glass, and in the Teutonic tradition the dead live in a place called Glasberg, the mountain of glass. And it is most curious to find, from Japan to Western Europe, these same images coming through again and again, showing how universal and how uniform this kind of visionary experience has been and how it has constantly been regarded as of immense importance and has been projected out into the cosmos in the various religious traditions.

VISIONARY ARTS

Let me talk very briefly about some of the arts which are visionary in nature. Needless to say, one of the most extraordinary which reached its pitch of excellence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the art of stained glass. Anybody who has been inside Chartres Cathedral or inside the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris will realize how extraordinary this art could be, that inside the Sainte-Chapelle, for example, one is inside an immense gem, a most elaborate kind of jewelled vision which one is at the heart of. It is a very interesting historical fact that in the twelfth century the famous Abbot of St. Denis, Suger, says that in his time, in all the churches, there were two collecting boxes, one for the poor, and one for making stained glass windows, and whereas the collecting box for the poor was generally empty, the collecting box for stained glass windows was always full, showing that people did immensely value this kind of visionary experience.

Another interesting fact is that visionary art is very often popular art, and many popular arts are very often visionary arts, for example the art of pageantry and processions of dressing up. All Kings and Popes and every member of the aristocracy, of the religious hierarchies of the past, have always understood perfectly well the enormous power of this kind of visionary display on human beings. These pageants, the entry of Kings into cities, the coronation of Popes, have always been immensely popular and have been, I think, among the most powerful instruments for persuading people that *de facto* authority was also *de jure, de jure divino* authority. And it is by creating a kind of visionary surrounding, visionary environment to the symbol of naked authority, that naked authority comes to be accepted as legitimate.

Another kind of popular art which is visionary is, of course, the art of fireworks. Fireworks had an enormous development even in the Roman empire, and after the invention of gunpowder they went much

further than they could ever go in the past. But these have always been enormously popular forms of art and are essentially visionary arts.

Similarly the art of spectacle in the theatre: the great Elizabethan and Jacobean masques of the sixteenth and seventeenth century on which fantastic sums were spent. There is the record of one masque put on by the lawyers of the Inns of Court in London which cost twenty thousand pounds in money of that period, which is an absolutely gigantic sum now, probably at least a quarter of a million pounds for one night's entertainment. I am showing the enormous interest and excitement which this kind of display evoked. Needless to say this kind of popular art, depending upon luminous display, is largely contingent upon the current development of technology. In the past, I am sure, with candles, extremely poor illumination was possible, and it is interesting to note that since the invention of the parabolic mirror at the end of the eighteenth century, then the invention of gas, then limelight, then electricity, it has become possible to produce visionary effects in the world of the theatre which were quite out of the question in the past.

Here again popular etymology is very interesting. It is interesting, for example, to find that Athanasius Kircher's invention in the seventeenth century was immediately called Lanterna Magica; his projection of a luminous image in a dark room on a white screen was immediately felt to be in some way magical. The word "magic lantern" was felt to be completely appropriate to this kind of visionary experience.

I find it very touching to think that one can trace a complete spectrum of visionary experience from fireworks through the magic lantern, through the modern review or coloured movie, coloured spectacle, right up through the visions of the Saints and finally the undifferentiated light of the mystics. This whole thing follows a continuous curve, and throughout there has been this immediate sense on the part of almost everyone concerned that there was something intrinsically valuable and important in this kind of experience.

And this leads me to my conclusion—what is the value of visionary experience?

THE VALUE OF VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

I suppose in a certain sense one can say the value is absolute. In a sense one can say that visionary experience is, so to say, a manifestation simultaneously of the beautiful and the true, of intense beauty and intense reality, and as such it doesn't have to be justified in any other way. After all, the Good, the True and the Beautiful are

absolute values, and in a certain sense one can say that visionary experience has always been regarded as an absolute value, that it has been always felt to be intrinsically of immense significance and importance and worth having at a very great price.

But it is also important to point out that, although they are in some sense intrinsically valuable and in some sense absolutely valuable, yet I think we can speak about visionary experiences in terms of their value within the frame of reference of goodness and spirituality. In this context I think it is very important to think of the theological definition of such experiences. The theological definition of a vision or even of a spontaneous mystical experience is "a gratuitous grace." These things are graces, they are given to us, we don't work for them. They come to us and they are gratuitous, which means to say that they are neither necessary nor significant for salvation or for enlightenment, whatever you like to call it. But if they are properly used, if they are co-operated with, if the memory of them is felt to be important and people work along the lines laid down during the vision, then they can be of immense value to us and of great importance in changing our lives. This idea of the gratuitous grace which takes on importance if we co-operate with it, is very significant in all the range of visionary experience, both spontaneous and induced.

We shall hear from Dr. Leary [8] about the induction of such experiences by such substances as psilocybin, and I would certainly say that this kind of induced experience may be of no value at all, it may be like just going to the movies and seeing an interesting film. Or on the contrary, if it is co-operated with, if we perceive this has some sort of deep significance and we do something about it, then it may be very, very important in changing our lives, changing our mode of consciousness, perceiving that there are other ways of looking at the world than the ordinary utilitarian manner, and it may also result in significant changes of behaviour. We of course now come to the philosophical problem: what is the metaphysical status of visions, what is the ontological status? Well, fortunately, this is a Congress of Applied Psychology, we don't have to go into this kind of problem, though I think it is worth going into, and I hope somebody will go into it sooner or later. But for the time being we can say, I think, that the value, apart from their intrinsic value, so to say the ethical, sociological and spiritual value of the visionary experience, is that if it is well used, it can result in a significant and important change in the mode of consciousness and perhaps also in a change in behaviour or for the good.

Verbatim transcription, slightly edited.

Chapter 34

1961
Exploring The Borderlands Of The Mind

ALDOUS HUXLEY

This Fate Magazine *article describes Huxley's impressions during a summer abroad in* 1961, *when he attended a Parapsychology Conference in St. Paul-de-Vence, met with an Italian physician in Turin who practiced the Chinese method of acupuncture, visited with Dr. and Mrs. Albert Hofmann in the suburbs of Zurich, and then flew to the Congress of Applied Psychology in Copenhagen. He concludes on a political note, his life-long assertive pacifism surfacing. A French translation of this article appeared in* Planète. *Both the American and French magazines are published largely for an occult-minded audience, which found in Huxley if not a champion at least an extremely gifted ally.*

LESS THAN two hours of flying time separates the Baltic from the world of the Mediterranean. In miles and minutes the distances between my various ports of call were very small; but by any mental measure they were enormous. Between post-Freudian psychotherapy and pre-Hippocratic Chinese acupuncture a great gulf is fixed.

Telepathy seems to have nothing to do with industrial psychology and the measurement of I.Qs. Visionary experience induced by Dr. Hofmann's mind-changing synthetics is far indeed from the kind of thinking that resulted in a paper on "The Effect of Meprobamate and Dextro-Amphetamine Sulphate on the Reaction Times of Normal Non-Hospitalized Subjects to Neutral and Taboo Words." And from all these it is a long, long way to that ultimate "freedom from the known" about which Krishnamurti talks. And yet all these incommensurable universes co-exist inside the human skull. Actually or potentially, they are all *our* universes. "What a piece of work is a man!"

The conference at Saint Paul-de-Vence was organized by the Parapsychology Foundation, whose president is that gifted, sensitive and indefatigable instigator of psychical research, Mrs. Eileen Garrett. There were four psychiatrists, Italian and Swiss, a Parisian endocrinologist and another French doctor specializing in

psychosomatic medicine, an eminent English neurologist, Dr. Grey Walter, and a young American parapsychologist, actively engaged in research and experiment.

A number of papers were read—on cases of apparently telepathic *rapport* between doctor and patient in psychotherapy; on the induction of hypnosis at a distance by telepathic means; on a series of experiments that seemed to show that a sleeper's dreams can be affected telepathically; and on another series, in which an instrument called the plethysmograph was used to record bodily changes occurring, on the unconscious level, in response to stimuli telepathically received. These reports of research in Switzerland and America were preceded by the work carried out in Russia 25 years ago, but only recently published, openly discussed and resumed.

The purpose of the Soviet research was to find out whether E.S.P. is a fact and, if it is, whether it can be explained in terms of physics, as a product of some kind of electromagnetic radiation. Enclosed in leaden capsules and immersed in baths of mercury, so that no radiation could possibly reach them, sensitive subjects turned in significantly good performances. The experimenters were forced to conclude—and in the days of Stalin the conclusion was extremely embarrassing—that telepathy occurs and is not a form of radio.

What does one do about data that do not suffer themselves to be explained in terms of currently accepted theory? In all too many cases, as William James pointed out two generations ago, one sticks to one's theory and does one's best to ignore the disturbing data. Herbert Spencer's idea of a tragedy (in T. H. Huxley's words) was a beautiful generalization murdered by an ugly fact.

Spencer's scholastic soul goes marching along, and the tendency to prefer the high, hallowed generalization to the odd, low, presumptuous datum is still to be met with even in the most respectable scientific circles. In terms of currently accepted theories the facts of parapsychology "make no sense." What is to be done? Should we shut our eyes to them in the hope that, if we don't look at them, they will go away and leave us in peace? Or should we accept them?

Accept them for the time being as inexplicable anomalies, while doing our best to modify current theories in such a way that they will "save the appearances"—*all* the appearances, including those that now seem to be outside the pale of explanation. The Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882, and those who have chosen the second of these two possible approaches to psi-phenomena are still hopefully waiting for a theory capable of saving all the appearances, from the atomic to the extra-sensory. From William James to C. D. Broad and H. H. Price in our own day, a succession of psi-minded philosophers

have hinted at ways in which all the appearances might be saved. But their suggestions have never been raised to the level of a testable theory, and the facts of parapsychology remain, after 80 years of systematic study, as odd and inexplicable as ever.

From Saint Paul and the extremely anomalous world of parapsychology I journeyed to Turin, where my wife and I spent a memorable evening talking with Dr. Quaglia Senta about his experience in the still rather anomalous universe of acupuncture. The Jesuit missionaries were the first Europeans to report on this curious branch of Chinese medicine. But it was not until 1928 that a full and accurate account of acupuncture reached the West. In that year Soulié de Morant returned from China and published his first treatise on the subject.

Today several hundreds of European doctors (and one lone English physician) combine the science and art of Western medicine with the ancient science and art of Chinese acupuncture. International Congresses of Acupuncture are now convened (the last was at the University of Clermont Ferrand), and it is reported that Soviet doctors are now taking a lively interest in the subject.

That a needle stuck into the outside surface of the leg a little below the knee should affect the functioning of the liver is obviously incredible. If our primary concern is to save, not the appearances, but our theory, we shall be tempted to ignore the empirically established facts and to dismiss the claims of the acupuncturists as mere superstition and hocus-pocus. It can't be true because, within our present frame of reference, it makes no sense.

To the Chinese, on the contrary, it may be perfectly good sense. In the normally healthy organism, they maintained, there is a continuous circulation of energy. Illness is at once a cause and a result of a derangement of this circulation. Vital organs may suffer from a deficiency or a disturbing excess of the life-force. Acupuncture redirects and normalizes the flow of energy.

This is possible because, as a matter of empirical fact, the limbs, trunk and head are lined with invisible "meridians," related in some way to the various organs of the body. On these meridians are located specially sensitive points. A needle inserted at one of these points will affect the functioning of the organ related to the meridian on which the point lies. By pricking at a number of judiciously selected points the skilled acupuncturist re-establishes the normal circulation of energy and brings the patient back to health.

Once again we are tempted to shrug our shoulders and say that it makes no sense. But then, reading the proceedings of the most recent Congress of Acupucture, we learn that experimenters have been able, by means of delicate electrical measuring instruments, to trace the

course of the Chinese meridians, and that when a strategic point is pricked with a needle relatively large changes of electrical state can be recorded. So perhaps, after all, the odd appearances of acupuncture will end by being saved even by *our* theories.

Meanwhile the fact remains that there are pathological symptoms on which the old Chinese methods work very well. Among these pathological symptoms (and this, in our present context, is particularly interesting) are various undesirable mental states—certain kinds of depression and anxiety, for example—which, being presumably related to organic derangements, disappear as soon as the normal circulation of energy is restored. Results which several years on the analyst's couch have failed to produce may be obtained, in some cases, by two or three pricks with a silver needle.

And this brings me to our conversation in the suburbs of Zurich, with Dr. and Mrs. Albert Hofmann. We human beings, in Andrew Marvell's phrase, are "rational amphibii," inhabiting simultaneously a soul-world and a world of first-order experience, a world of abstract notions and generalizations and a world of unique events. Dr. Hofmann is an eminent chemist, whose most recent and spectacular work has been done in that strange borderland between two worlds, where the tiniest of biochemical changes will produce enormous and revolutionary changes in the mind.

Dr. Hofmann's synthetics are new; but the ethical, philosophical and religious problems that they so dramatically raise are very old. That beer (together with tea, coffee, aspirin, vitamins and a score of psychic energizers and tranquillizers) should do "more than Milton can/To justify God's ways to man" is a plain fact of observation and experience—a fact which some people find depressing and humiliating, others consolatory and rather amusing. To what extent are our thoughts, beliefs and actions the products of our inherited physique and temperament, and of the fluctuations, in response to internal and external events, of our body-chemistry? Just how valid is a philosophy based upon a state of mind (say the conviction of sin) which can be radically changed by the prick of a needle or a small daily dose of Ritalin? And what about those experiences induced by Dr. Hofmann's physically harmless mind-changers—experiences of a world transfigured into unimaginable loveliness, charged with intrinsic significance, and manifesting, in spite of pain and death, an essential and (there is no other word) divine All-Rightness? Yes, what about them? Opinions differ.

For most of those to whom the experiences have been vouchsafed, their value is self-evident. By Dr. Zaehner, the author of *Mysticism Sacred and Profane,* their deliberate induction is regarded as immoral. To which his colleague, Professor Price retorts in effect, "Speak for

yourself!"

Price would agree with William James that, if one can achieve the feat without harming oneself or others, the induction of unusual states of consciousness is salutary and enlightening. And long ago, defending William James against those who had blamed him for experimenting with nitrous oxide, Bergson pointed out that the chemical was not the cause of James's remarkable metaphysical experiences, merely their occasion. The same experiences might have been induced by purely psychological means, by the mortifications and exercises used by the mystics and visionaries of every religious tradition, by any method, indeed, capable of altering states of mind or changing body chemistry in such a way as to lower the barrier separating the world fabricated by our everyday, biologically useful and socially conditioned perceptions, thoughts and feelings from the strange and yet subjectively (and perhaps even objectively) no less real worlds revealed when the mode of consciousness has been changed from the utilitarian to the aesthetic or spiritual.

Spiritual. … For sensitive ears, alive to its overtones of inspirational twaddle, this is almost a dirty word. And yet, in certain contexts, what other word can one use? Reading Meister Eckhart, for example, or listening, as we did at Gstaad, to Krishnamurti, one is forced to recognize that "spiritual" can be *mot juste.* "I show you sorrow and the ending of sorrow."

All the great masters of the spiritual life (that word again!) have been at once profoundly pessimistic and almost infinitely optimistic. *If* certain conditions are fulfilled, human beings may cease to behave as the pathetic or deplorable creatures they mistakenly think they are and be what in fact they always have been, if they had only given themselves a chance of knowing it—enlightened, liberated, "godded in God." But that more than a very few of us will ever fulfill those conditions is overwhelmingly improbable. Many are called, but very few are chosen; for very few ever choose to be chosen.

The ending of sorrow is feasible; but the continuance of sorrow is certain. All that the masters of the spiritual life can do is to remind us of who in fact we are and of the means whereby we may come to the recognition of our identity—meditation in the sense of complete and inclusive awareness at every instant, and the corollaries of such meditation, right being and, from right being, spontaneous right action.

From France, Italy and Switzerland, and from far-out E.S.P., farther-out visionary experience and farthest-out enlightenment, we flew to Copenhagen and the International Congress of Applied Psychology. What *is* Applied Psychology? Or should one put it the other way round and ask what is not Applied Psychology? Answer: precious little, at

least in regard to individual behavior on the (statistically speaking) normal level. This capacious subject was discussed at Copenhagen by 1,300 delegates, who listened to two or three hundred papers on every conceivable subject from "Figure Drawing as an Expression of Self-Esteem" to "Social Research in the Arctic."

The world is so full of a number of things, and universities are so full of a number of psychologists, that I cannot possibly do justice to all that was read and spoken at Copenhagen. I shall therefore confine myself to the most important question of all, and the one to which, alas, the answers proposed were the least satisfactory. Can psychology contribute to the easing of international tensions, the solution of conflicts, the maintenance of peace?

In the lecture with which Professor Osgood opened the Congress,[1] and in the papers read at the next day's symposium, there were plenty of sensible and humane suggestions. One listened with approval, but at the same time with a haunting doubt.

Would the sensible and humane suggestions be accepted? In the present historical context, in the prevailing ideological climate, *could* they be accepted? And though it is obviously true that, in Dr. Baumgarten-Tramer's words, there exists an urgent *Notwendigkeit der Bildung einer Psychologie für Politiker,* is it probable that the few scores of politicians, generals and technologists, at whose mercy the remaining 29,000 million of the human race now find themselves, will consent to go to school again and learn that psychology for statesmen which it is so indispensably necessary to formulate and teach? These few enormously powerful men, at whose mercy the whole human race now lies, are themselves the hypnotized prisoners of political and philosophical traditions which, being grounded in nationalistic idolatry and ideological dogmatism, have in the past invariably led to war.

The neurotic individual is a person who responds to the challenges of the present in terms of the obsessively remembered past. In so far as their policies are dictated by old erroneous notions fossilized into dogmas, all societies exhibit the symptoms of collective neurosis, and the few powerful men in whose clutch (like Gulliver in the paw of the Brobdingnagian monkey) mankind now impotently writhes, are themselves the victims of their society's alienation from present reality.

In earlier times, when the rate of technological and demographic change was slow, societies could afford the luxury of their collective neurosis. Today political behavior dictated by obsessive memories of the past (in other words, by venerable traditions that have lost their point, and by old, silly or actually diabolic notions raised to the level of first principles and canonized as dogmas) is apt to be fatally

inappropriate.

And, alas, the cure for this fatal inappropriateness of current political behavior cannot be found in applied psychology alone. The problem is exceedingly complex and, if it is ever to be solved, it must be attacked simultaneously on many fronts—on the semantic front (for it is an affair of misused language and unexamined beliefs); on the organizational front (for it involves the brute fact of power and the problems of its control); on the philosophical front (for our political behavior is influenced to some extent by our view of human nature); on the biological front (for beneath the political problems lie the problems of rocketing population and unevenly distributed resources).

A co-ordinated attack on all these fronts will be difficult to mount and harder still to sustain. Time is not on our side. Given the facts of individual and social inertia, can we do what has to be done within the brief and dwindling span which modern history (the history of headlong technological and demographic change, with all their social consequences) allows us? On the international level an ending of at least some of our collective sorrows is feasible. How likely is it? All the nations and their rulers are called. Before it is too late, will they choose to be chosen?

Chapter 35

1962
Love and Work

LAURA HUXLEY

While correcting the proofs of Island *in their new home (which they shared with Ginny Pfeiffer) on Mulholland Highway, Huxley one day put aside his work to make another trial of psilocybin. The major portion of this session was tape recorded, and later transcribed and edited by his wife Laura. It is apparently the only "live" account in existence of Aldous in the psychedelic state. Laura's understanding of the role of guide had deepened since the* 1955 *episode, enriched by her own psychedelic experiences, as well as those she arranged for some of her patients at an appropriate stage of their psychotherapy.*

The mantras unfold: love and work, passion and detachment, the "fundamental sanity" that exists in the world "in spite of all the distraction and preposterous nonsense which is going on," the synchronicity of great philosophy and running noses leading into a discussion of death and the value of the Eastern yoga of dying, exemplified in the Bhagavad-Gita, Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, *and above all,* The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

THE FOLLOWING is a report of a psychedelic session with Aldous. It is the only one of which I have a tape recording, not of the entire session but of the major portion.

A few months after Aldous's death, when I found this tape, I was deeply moved by it. I had forgotten it, and now, after his death, these words were more than ever meaningful if, at times, equivocal. And how nice it was to swing from "life after death" to "soup here and now," from the Sermon on the Mount to running noses! And again I realized the constant consideration and encouragement Aldous gave to my current project, even on that extraordinary day.

I first thought of publishing his recorded words as they are, without comment. But when the tape was transcribed on paper I began to see that they would not be as clear to a reader as they were to me, a participant in the dialogue. There is a world of difference between reading a conversation and hearing it. In reading, two important elements are missing: the voice, so significant particularly in Aldous's case, for he had such a variety of inflections, of color and moods and

rhythm; and the pauses, always important but more so in this kind of dialogue. I could have edited this conversation, but I prefer to leave it as it is on the tape. Aldous's phrases are not as well rounded and clear as in his writings and lectures—but he was not giving a lecture; he was speaking to me. I feel that the content and the authenticity of his words outweigh the consideration of literary elegance.

Another reason for commenting on this taped conversation is that Aldous is referring to subjects unfamiliar to many people. The experiencing of the Clear Light of the Void, of the Bardo or after-death state, of the fighting hero of the *Bhagavad-Gita*—these are not everyday topics; yet they are of the greatest importance for us all. In this conversation Aldous refers to two books: The *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.* I had not read these books at the time, but Aldous had told me a great deal about them. To anyone who has read them, what Aldous says is intellectually clear. But while familiarity with these books throws a light on our dialogue, Aldous's conversation—the atmosphere, the aura of it—is in no way a discussion of them. The extraordinary part of this conversation is the feeling that Aldous is experiencing that which he has known for a long time. But, as he wrote in "Knowledge and Understanding,"[1] there is a world of difference: "Understanding is primarily direct awareness of raw materials." On the other hand, knowledge is acquired and "can be passed on and shared by means of words and other symbols. Understanding is an immediate experience and can only be talked about (very inadequately) never shared." Knowledge is "public." Understanding is "private." In *Island* the children are given an illustration of this difference in the lower fifth grade, at about the age of ten.

> 'Words are public; they belong to all the speakers of a given language; they are listea in dictionaries. And now let's look at the things that happen out there.' He pointed through the open window. Gaudy against a white cloud, half a dozen parrots came sailing into view, passed behind a tree and were gone.… 'What happens out there is public—or at least fairly public,' he qualified. 'And what happens when someone speaks or writes words—that's also public,' But the things that go on inside … are private. Private.' He laid a hand on his chest. 'Private.' He rubbed his forehead. 'Private.'

The words Aldous spoke in this psychedelic experience can be looked up in the dictionary; they are public. The understanding of his experience is a private matter for each of us.

This session was different from others in many ways. Usually, when

we had a psychedelic session, the evening before and the day of the session were kept absolutely and rigorously empty. This time we went out to dinner the night preceding the session. I further notice from my calendar that on the day of the session, January 22, 1962—a Monday—there were three other entries: a house guest arriving at the airport, the maid's birthday, and a tentative visit to a family whose three members were all mentally ill, but at large.

It was because the day was not to be entirely free that we changed from LSD to psilocybin. Unlike LSD, which lingers on for many hours even after the high point is passed, psilocybin usually shuts off completely. In fact, this session lasted only from 10:40 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Considering that Aldous had taken such a small dose, we wondered, later, that it had such a marked effect.

That morning after breakfast we went to my studio apartment, where we would not be disturbed. The studio is practically empty of furniture. The floor is covered by a shaggy white rug—it looks like white grass and is soft and pleasant to sit on. As usual, but especially for a psychedelic session, there were fresh flowers and fruits. Here and there, punctuating the white emptiness, there were fresh bamboo, shells, art books, records, and a few branches of golden acacia that had just burst into bloom in our half-burned garden. In the nook off the living room there were unpainted bookshelves, a large piece of unpainted wood which serves as a desk, a tape recorder, and two small armchairs.

At 10:40 a.m., Aldous took four mg of psilocybin.

There is a period of half an hour to about two hours between the ingestion of psilocybin and the beginning of its effect. Usually during this period we talked or looked at pictures; more often we listened to music—or did nothing at all. One never knows in which direction these experiences may move. Sometimes the "doors of perception" are cleansed suddenly with a jolt; sometimes the cleansing comes gradually with ever increasing discoveries. These discoveries may be psychological insights, or may be made through any of the senses—it is usually from the eyes that the scales first flake off.

In the psychedelic session the role of a companion is to be there, fully attentive, and with no preconceived opinion of what might happen. A companion must be, at the same time, completely there and completely out of the way. Sometimes one feels that one should be there in the most intense and alert passivity one can master—but, paradoxically, be there invisibly. However, this was never the case with Aldous. Sessions with him had always been easy, and I knew he wanted me there, visible and tangible.

A companion to the psychedelic experience should not have a preconceived idea—but to have *no* opinion is very hard to achieve. As

it happens, that morning I found myself thinking that this session would be very light, since the dosage was so small, and that it would be similar to the others I had with Aldous—that it would modulate from beauty and the intense presence of life to love on all levels, the human as well as the mystical.

Surprisingly Aldous asked me to stop the music. It was Bach, probably the *Musical Offering* or a cantata.

I turned off the record player, and as I was wondering whether Aldous would want to hear something else, he got up from the floor where he was sitting and began pacing the corridor joining the living room to the bedroom. This also had never happened before. Aldous, like most people in a psychedelic experience, would move very little, generally staying in the same place most of the day.

I paced with him a few times, trying to feel what he was feeling. He looked preoccupied, and there was a feeling of agitation in him, and-again most unusual—he was muttering something in a low, unclear voice. I could not at first make out what he was saying. Then I understood the words "Confusion—terrible confusion." I paced the floor with him again—there was an unusual agitation in his movements, in his expression, in the half phrases he was saying. After a while, to my question, "Where is this confusion?" he said it was in life after death; I think he mentioned the word *limbo*. He was contacting, or being, or feeling, a bodiless world in which there was a terrifying confusion.

In psychedelic sessions there are often long periods, sometimes hours, when not a single word is uttered. Music, or sometimes silence, is the least inadequate way to express the unspeakable, the best way not to name the unnamable. But I knew those ecstatic moments, for they were reflected in Aldous's face—and even in those moments Aldous would say a word or two. But this was a different situation. Aldous was not having an ecstatic experience—he was going through something very intense, of great importance, but not pleasant. He did not seem to be willing or able to put it into words. This state lasted perhaps half an hour. Then quite suddenly he said, "It is all right now —it is all right." His face changed; he sat in the armchair near the tape recorder; that other world had suddenly dissolved. He looked well and I could feel he was now ready to speak about his experience. His mind was at a high pitch of activity.

ALDOUS'S FIRST WORDS ON TAPE:

You see, this is—I was thinking of one of your titles—this is one of the ways of trying to make ice cubes out of running water, isn't it? To fix something and try to keep it—of course, it is always wrong.

I thought he meant it was wrong to fix his impression on tape.

LAURA: Well, let's stop the recorder.

ALDOUS *(immediately and with emphasis):* No, no—I don't mean that I mean the pure light is the greatest ice cube of all, the ultimate ice cube.

Aldous was referring to one of my "Recipes for Living and Loving," which had required a lot of rewriting. The title of the recipe is: "Don't Try to Make Ice Cubes Out of a Flowing River." [2] Its concept is that our organisms are continuously changing in a continuously changing world; that the essence of life is its fluidity, its ability to change, to flow and to take a new course; that the trouble is that sometimes, usually unconsciously and unwillingly, we freeze a piece of this flowing life into an "ice cube." In the recipe, examples are given illustrating how harmful this can be; then there are directions on how to unfreeze these "ice cubes" that imprison our life and energy. Briefly, "ice cube" refers to the enduring, chilling effect of an unexpressed overemotional experience of grief, anger, or fear in their varied and numerous manifestations. Aldous had helped me with the recipe, and the phrase "ice cubes in a flowing river" was a current phrase with us.

ALDOUS: The pure light. This is the greatest ice cube of all—it's the ultimate ice cube.

The Pure Light. The Clear Light of the Void. The experience of Godliness. Mystical experience. The peak experience… . How many names, throughout the centuries and in all different cultures, have been given to that state for which the most sophisticated of word virtuosos say there are no words! I remember Aldous's saying that Saint Augustine, who wrote volumes of treatises basic to Catholic theology, toward the end of his life had the experience of Pure Light-and never wrote a word again. In *Island* Aldous describes that experience as "knowledgeless understanding, luminous bliss."

LAURA: You thought you were going to have *that* [the *Pure Light]* today?

ALDOUS: Well now, I can if I want to! But I mean it is very good to realize that it is just the—so to say—the mirror image of this other thing. It is just this total distraction—I mean, if you can immobilize the total distraction long enough, then it becomes the pure, one-pointed distraction—pure light.

LAURA: If you can immobilize it? What do you mean?

ALDOUS: YOU can immobilize it, but it isn't the real thing—you can remain for eternity in this thing *at the exclusion of love and work.*
LAURA: But *that thing should* be love and work.
ALDOUS *(with emphasis): Exactly!* I mean this is why it is wrong. As I was saying, this illustrates that you mustn't make ice cubes out of a Flowing River. You may *succeed* in making ice cubes … this is the greatest ice cube in the world. But you can probably go on for —oh, you can't go on forever—but for enormous eons—for what *appears* [*this word is greatly emphasized*] to be eternity, being in light.

In his later years Aldous put more and more emphasis on the danger of being addicted to meditation *only,* to knowledge *only,* to wisdom *only*—without love. Just now he had experienced the temptation to an addiction of an even higher order: the addiction of being in the light and staying there. "Now, I can if I want to," he had said. Staying in this ecstatic consciousness and cutting oneself off from participation and commitment to the rest of the world—this is perfectly expressed today, in powerful slang, in the phrase "dropping out."

ALDOUS *(continuing):* It completely denies the facts: it is morally wrong; and finally, of course, absolutely catastrophic.

"Absolutely catastrophic." Those two words are said with the most earnest and profound conviction. The voice is not raised, but each letter is as if sculptured on a shining block of Carrara marble—and remains sculptured on the soul of anyone who hears it It is a definitive statement: one cannot isolate oneself from one's fellows and environment, for there is no private salvation; one might "get stuck" even in the Pure Light instead of infusing it in "Love and Work," which is the direct solution for everyone's life, right here and now. Love and Work—if I should put in a nutshell the essence of Aldous's life, I could not find a more precise way of saying it.

After the words "absolutely catastrophic," the tape runs for a while in silence. And then there is a complete change of mood. A tender, enveloping smile is in Aldous's voice, *my* smile. It comes through the voice, creating an atmosphere of love and amused surprise, but, above all, of tenderness.

ALDOUS: I don't know how you got all these things, darling. *(Laughter.)* What came into this hard, hard skull of yours—how do all these extraordinary ideas come in?

He was always so pleased when I invented something, and he was now going back to the ice-cube recipe.

> LAURA: At least the one of the ice cubes I remember very well. I was giving LSD——to and I had this feeling. . . I just practically was seeing a torrent of water—you know, a river—and he was trying to make such logic out of it—so that he would show that all those people lied, you see… .
> ALDOUS: *(interrupting with hearty laughter):* Of course they lie!
> LAURA: And I had the impression that he was rationalizing water, or even trying to freeze a piece of this flowing river and make ice cubes of it . . .
> ALDOUS: *(still laughing, and touching my head):* But you have so many ideas. Obviously, this terribly hard skull has a hole in it somewhere. (A *great deal of chuckling and laughter.)*
> LAURA: I hope so.
> ALDOUS *(after a silence):* It is certainly very remarkable.

Having "a hole in one's skull" has different meaning for different people. Aldous meant here that these ideas must have flowed *into* my head, not *out* of it. Especially after his psychedelic experiences, Aldous often mentioned the Bergson theory—that our brain and nervous system are not the source of our ideas, but rather a reducing valve through which Mind-at-Large trickles only the kind of information that is necessary for us to survive on this planet. A temporary widening of that valve, or "a hole in the head," permits a fragment of Mind-at-Large to flow in—that is what we usually call inspiration. In *The Doors of Perception,* where Aldous reports his first psychedelic experience, he speaks at length of this theory of Bergson's and says that it should be seriously considered.

There is a silence on the tape and then the dialogue continues in a thoughtful, serious mood.

> LAURA: I don't remember if I told you, or I dreamed I told you—did I tell you of the phrase running in my mind these days, "I am a thousand people"?
> ALDOUS : No, you didn't tell me.
> LAURA: But that also doesn't make anything easy.
> ALDOUS : No, obviously. And when there is no anchorage anywhere —when, to come back to after death, I mean, there will be no anchorage… .
> LAURA: Oh, yes. I see.

Aldous was thinking about, and putting in words, the experience he

had had a while before, when he was walking up and down the corridor. He had experienced the bodiless state of After-Death, where there is a survival of consciousness, but not of the body as we know it.

> ALDOUS: So, when there will be a thousand people rushing in different directions—I mean, anyhow … *(then in a very low aside)* your hair smells the same as acacias … your head is very solid *(touching my head)* because the point is: when there isn't anything like this… .

This—a tangible body, something to see, to hear, to smell, to *touch* —*in* contrast to that other state of being, which he had experienced before, where there were feelings and thoughts, but no perceptions, senses, or solid forms as we are used to them.

> LAURA: When there is nothing to hold on… .
> ALDOUS: There are a thousand different people going in a thousand different directions: and this is what you have a hint of now. And this, of course, is what is so terrible, but I think that I know—(And *after a pause, with deep conviction)* but I *know* that there will always be—and I mean *this* is the extraordinary experience—at least there is *somebody* there who *knows* there are a thousand other people going in different directions—that there is a fundamental sanity of the world, which is always there *in spite* of the thousand people going in a thousand different directions. And while we are in space and time, surrounded by gravity, we are controlled to a considerable extent. *(I wish I could convey the depth of Aldous's voice here, the feeling of wonder.)* But to have an insight into what it is when there isn't any control except this fundamental knowledge—I mean this is where the bardo is right.

Aldous is referring to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* or the *After-Death Experience on the Bardo Plane.* I had first heard of this book from Aldous a few days after Maria's death. In answer to a note from me he had asked me for lunch and a walk. He knew innumerable country lanes right in the middle of Los Angeles and not far from his home, so after lunch we went walking in Laurel Canyon. I had many questions in my mind about Maria and he answered them without my asking, telling me all that had happened after our summer meeting in Rome.

He said that for the last few hours of her life he had spoken to her, encouraging her to go forward, as in the Bardo. "What is that?" I asked. He told me then about the Bardo—or the intermediate plane following bodily death, as described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* explaining that in these ancient teachings the dying person is

encouraged to go on—to go further—not to be preoccupied or encumbered with this present body, or with relatives or friends or unfinished business, but to go into a wider state of consciousness.

He went on to say that the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is as much a manual of the Art of Living as it is of the Art of Dying. The survivors are advised to think of the loved one and of his need and destiny in his new state of consciousness rather than to be completely and egocentrically involved in their own grief. "Go on. Go forward"—to both consciousnesses, the one who is still using the body and the one whose body is being discarded—that is sound and compassionate advice. "Go on. Go forward."

How many of us are walking around, not wholly alive because part of us did *not* go forward but died with Mother or Father or some other beloved person—even, at times, a pet? The terrifying, incomprehensible fact of death is difficult enough to accept and assimilate even with the most illumined teaching, even with the warmest, most tangible encouragement—let alone when there is no help in understanding, in accepting, in speaking about death. How can one even begin to understand death when it is hardly a permissible subject in good society? Sex is now an acceptable topic of conversation; death is still swept under the carpet, still locked in the dungeon, as the insane were, not too long ago.

That first walk after Maria's death remained impressed on me. I had vaguely heard of this wise, noble way of dealing with death, as an esoteric doctrine. Now Aldous, stricken and pale, yet fully alive, was telling me how he had applied this knowledge; how he had encouraged Maria to go on without worry or regrets. As he spoke during that walk I compared my own acquaintance with death: the lugubrious services, tragically chanting of sin, hellfire, and eternal damnation; the piteous begging for mercy from a distant deity, alternately irate and forgiving; while we, the survivors, enmeshed in grief and completely centered in it, hardly gave thought to the dead person except in relation to our anguish. It is distressing to think that the concern and money lavished on cadavers in America would be enough to feed millions of children, enough to divert lives of delinquency and despair into lives of human dignity and happiness.

Aldous continued to tell me, during that first walk after Maria's death, how he had carried her over as far as he could. He was as crushed as any human being who has lost a beloved companion of a lifetime; and yet, at the time of her death, he had been able to divert his own attention from the pain of losing her and focus both her mind and his on that most important fact—on that *fundamental sanity* of which he speaks in every psychedelic experience—and throughout this one.

The tape continues.

> ALDOUS: The Bardo is right. You see, you have to be aware of this thing, *and hang onto it for dear life*—otherwise you are just completely in a whirlwind.
> LAURA: Yes. But how many people do know this?
> ALDOUS *(with great emphasis):* Exactly! But this is why they say we really ought to start preparing for this. *(Aldous was speaking about preparation for death.)* And I must say I think it is *terribly important* that through this knowledge that we get through these mushrooms or whatever it is,[3] you understand a little bit of what it is all about. I think the most extraordinary experience is to know that there is all this insanity which is just the multiplication … the caricature of the normal insanity that goes on. But that there is a fundamental sanity which you can remain one with and be aware of. This, of course, is the whole doctrine of the Bardo—helping people to be aware of the fundamental sanity which is there in spite of all the terrifying things—and also not really terrifying, but sometimes ecstatic, wonderful things. You *mustn't* go to heaven, as they continually say.

Again and again! No dropping out from Love and Work, even from an unsatisfactory society, into the personal isolated security of Pure Light with or without psychedelics. "As they continuously say"—Aldous is referring to the Mahayana Buddhists, for whom the Bodhisattva is the highest form of man: such a man does not wallow in private salvation but lives and participates in the world's activities out of compassion for those who have not yet achieved enlightenment.

I wanted to know more about not going to heaven.

> LAURA: You mustn't go to heaven?
> ALDOUS: You *mustn't* go *to heaven.* It is just as dangerous. It is temporary—and somehow you want to hold on to the ultimate truth of things.
> LAURA: The ultimate truth of things?
> ALDOUS: Well, I mean … the total light of the world, I suppose, which is in the here and now we experience. It's of course the mind-body. But when you are released from the body there has to be some experimental equivalent of the body, something has to be held on to ... I don't know.
> LAURA: What does one hold to then?
> ALDOUS: All you can say is one holds to this fundamental sanity, which as I say is *guaranteed,* as long as one is in the body, by the fact of space and time and gravity, and three dimensions and all

the rest of it. Somehow, when you get rid of those anchors—

In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* we are often warned of this danger of going to a phantasmagoric, illusionary hell or heaven. The guide (or *guru)* explains that in this bodiless state all our thoughts and feelings seem to take concrete form. Thoughts are things. The dead person sees these things and, unless helped, he gets trapped in them. So he is continuously told that these apparitions are only hallucinations—are only a projection of his consciousness—and that he must go forward without becoming involved in them, without repulsion or attraction; that he must realize that they arc only distractions which he himself has created. Continuously repeated is the admonition: "Oh, Nobly Born! Let not thy mind be distracted." Similarly, the first and last word in *Island* is "Attention." It is the first word the distracted, wounded traveler from the West-thc man who would not take *yes* for an answer—hears on that Island, sung by the mynah bird; a charming way the novelist synthesizes in a single word an ancient vital message to all: Attention.

ALDOUS *(continuing):* But there is an equivalent of some kind which has to be caught hold of. Otherwise, the world about you is thin and becomes—what is the word—*Pretas,* the world of the restless ghosts. One goes to hell and then in desperation one has to rush back and get another body.

LAURA: To hold on again?

ALDOUS: To hold on again. Well, this is obviously the best thing, if one hasn't got the ultimate best. But clearly they all have said that there is something which is the equivalent—again in this extraordinary doctrine of Christianity, the resurrection of the body, and ultimately immortality will have something like the body attached to it. I don't know what it means, but obviously one can't attach any ordinary meaning to it. But one sees exactly what they are after—some idea that somehow we have to get an equivalent on a higher level of this anchorage which space and time and gravitation give us. And which can be achieved. One has, as I say, in this strange experience, one has the sense that there is this fundamental sanity in spite of all the distraction and preposterous nonsense which is going on—and which is irrelevant to oneself—which has nothing to do, in a strange way, although it may seem very, very important. *(Silence, then:)*

It is very important, if one can, *while it is happening,* if one can see the outer-appearance of it. It is obviously important to look after one's affairs in a sensible way and see their importance, in a silly way, but if one can, through all this, see this other level of

importance, in the light of which a lot of activities will have to be cut down. There will seem to be absolutely no point in undertaking them—although a great many have to be undertaken, but they will be undertaken in a new kind of way—with a kind of detachment, and yet with a doing things to one's limit. This is again one of the paradoxes: to work to the limit to succeed in what you are doing, and at the same time to be detached from it—if you don't succeed, well, that's too bad—if you do succeed—tant mieux—you don't have to gloat over it. This is the whole story of the Bhagavad-Gita: somehow to do everything with passion but with detachment.

LAURA: Passion and detachment… .

Passion and detachment. Years ago, before I had ever heard of these philosophies, with what passion I had longed for detachment! That was the ideal I had set for myself as a musician; to play with all I had, to burn with passion, yet maintain a crystalline purity and detachment in technical and stylistical perfection. And in these recent years of psychological work and exploration, I had seen, in my everyday life and work, in me and outside of me, all kinds and degrees of passion only or of detachment only—but how rarely the fusion of the two!

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* the hero Arjuna is a great warrior, and Krishna, or Incarnation of the Supreme Spirit, is his guide. Arjuna is told that he must fight with all his strength and valor—and yet must be detached from the fight.

If we look inside and around, we can see many ways in which this battle is carried on, three of which are the most conspicuous. One is the way of the fighter, who, being inwardly discontented, resentful, and punitive, is chemically and psychologically *compelled* to fight. He *has* to be contrary; he must give and take *no* for an answer even if—sometimes especially *if*—*yes* is to his advantage. He is fighting an outer enemy who often is only a reflected shadow of the inner one; even when the outer enemy is conquered, the inner one is only temporarily appeased. Then there is another kind of fighter: the man who is easily discouraged, who remains passive, rather than risk the possibility of defeat; overcautious and suspicious, he deceives himself rather than face problems and decisions. There is still another kind of fighter, the one of which Krishna speaks. We encounter this type also—but how rarely! He is one that fights only after an ethical evaluation of the issue and of his own original motives. Regardless of victory or defeat, an inner peace is there. This warrior, liberated from subconscious demons, clear-minded and controlled, may appear on the outside relentless, determined, even furious; inwardly, he is invulnerably harmonious.

In the Gita these three types of men are so described:

> The doer without desire,
> Who does not boast of his deed,
> Who is ardent, enduring,
> Untouched by triumph,
> In failure untroubled:
> He is a man of *sattwa* [the energy of inspiration].
>
> The doer with desire,
> Hot for the prize of vainglory,
> Brutal, greedy and foul
> In triumph too quick to rejoice,
> In failure despairing:
> He is a man of *rajas* [the energy of action].
>
> The indifferent doer
> Whose heart is not in his deed,
> Stupid and stubborn,
> A cheat, and malicious,
> The idle lover of delay,
> Easily dejected:
> He is a man of *tamos* [the energy of inertia].[4]

Aldous was speaking of the man who fights with the energy of inspiration *(sattwa)*.

> ALDOUS: One can see what it is—he is not involved even though he is involved up to the limit. What part of him is not involved? But it's no good trying to make an analysis because, as usual, it is a paradox and a mystery.
> LAURA: But even if …
> ALDOUS: One begins to understand it, that that is the main problem.

There were many pauses in this conversation. Most of the words were formulated slowly, in an effort to clarify realities to which most of us are unaccustomed. Aldous had been speaking quietly and thoughtfully. In spite of the poor recording, which is often blurred by noises of cars and static, one can feel that the atmosphere is impregnated with thought and discoveries. Now there is a pause, then a few noises—we are taking Kleenex out of a box. Then:

> ALDOUS: My nose is running. *(Now the mood and the voice change*

completely, become light, and there is amused laughter in Aldous's voice.) A very good reminder that the greatest philosophy is connected *inextricably* with running noses. One of the things they should have talked about in the Gospel. Obviously he was on a mountain—the Sermon of the Mount—it must have been very breezy and cold up there. Probably his nose did run.

There is no iconoclastic intention in the voice—only a chuckling and a reaffirmation of Aldous's conviction that everything is connected with everything else and that we should not forget it; no matter on what high plane of spirituality we dwell we are still bound by the laws of nature. I am sure also that Aldous realized at that moment that he had been speaking gravely for quite a while—it was natural for him, thank heaven, to lighten gravity with charm and humor.

LAURA *(after a silence):* But it is very difficult. How does one prepare for death? All of this seems, as you say, to make it very… .

ALDOUS: I think that the only way one can prepare for death … you realize that, well, after all, all your psychotherapy is in a sense a preparation for death inasmuch as you *die* to these memories which are allowed to haunt you as though they were in the present: "Let the dead bury their dead." Obviously, the completely healthy way to live is "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Aldous often quoted these words, which were Christ's way of saying, "Live here and now." He suggested I put this quotation in my recipe, "Lay the Ghost," which deals with the problem of haunting emotional memories that interfere with our present. He felt that Christ's saying to the man who wanted to bury his father, "Follow me, and let the dead bury him," was about as strong a way as there was to say, "Live here and now." One should not worry about the past or the future, since each day has enough problems. That principle he also lived—either he could do something here and now about a problem Q he would not permit it to interfere with here and now.

ALDOUS : You accept this without being obsessed by what is in the past—you die to it. Preparation for ultimate death is to be aware that *your highest and most intense form of life is accompanied by, and conditional upon, a series of small deaths all the time. We have to be dying to these obsessive memories. I mean, again the paradox is to be able to remember with extreme clarity, but not to be haunted.*

Aldous is speaking here of the difference between the two memories, the informational memory and the emotional memory. The informational memory is essential to us, to carry on our daily life. The emotional memory has a more subtle, powerful, and, at times, all-pervading quality; especially when unconscious, it can haunt us with ghosts of our emotional past, robbing us of the energy and attention we need here and now.

> LAURA: But even without the memories there is this composite figure that we are—the composition of so many characters—and if they don't have something to meet on, a common ground, which is the body, where do they meet?
> ALDOUS: Well, they have to meet, I suppose, in some—what is called quote "the Spirit," as we meet normally on this unconscious-subconscious level. And then they also meet on the superconscious level, which, of course, completely contains the unconscious. (Pause.) And this would be certainly the teaching of the Bardos—these thousand figures—they can either meet in the wrong way which is by … to the point of distraction through the ice cube or they can meet through the recognition of the ultimate in the spirit, on that level.

This is a repetition of what Aldous said in the beginning: either there is a meeting in that terrifying confusion of thoughts and emotions whirling around without the safety of a common ground which is the body; or there is meeting in awareness of that fundamental sanity-of-the-world which he felt so strongly.

> ALDOUS: And this is why they all say you have to work rather hard, and try and realize this fact—and one of the ways of realizing it is —after all, in that little "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones"[5]—the preparation is through these exercises in consciousness. This sort or leads on to the third layer of consciousness.
> LAURA: But then in between the two extremes there is so much leeway… .
> ALDOUS:There are too many ways of going wrong. I mean, the best-intentioned people go wrong. *(Long silence.)* I will look at this Rembrandt—

On the tape, one hears confused noises. Aldous was looking at art books—Rembrandt was to him the greatest of all painters. My voice is heard, from the other room, speaking on the phone to Paula, Ginny's daughter, then eleven years old, who was not in school that day. Then

we again hear Aldous's voice. Since the fire we had been living with Ginny and her two children, and this close association made the problem of education very concrete to Aldous. He was seeing every day the difficulty of educating two children in a large city like Los Angeles. The problem had so many facets; he brought up one in this conversation.

ALDOUS: If she wants us, darling, we can go back there. Is she alone? She probably doesn't want to be alone. Maybe we should go. *(Silence.)* She said she wanted to write a story so I gave her a pen. *(Another silence.)* When I think of the admirable thing which was in my little boys' school.

LAURA: Yes? A routine?

ALDOUS: Well, I mean we had this carpenter's shop. We could always spend our spare time there when we wanted to, and this was compulsory two or three hours a week. There was this carpenter who was the school handy man, but he was a trained carpenter. We went through all the exercises which the apprentice had to learn—almost up to the master work. This is what "masterpiece" means: the apprentice learns all the things, and finally he produces his final examination as Ph.D.

LAURA: Really?

ALDOUS: In the case of a carpenter there would be all the different kinds of mortices, dovetail, and so on—various things joined together.

LAURA: Which is very difficult.

ALDOUS: Very difficult. You see, all the surfaces would be absolutely planed—you will have learned to plane absolutely even.

LAURA: Did you do that?

ALDOUS: Yes. Yes, we went right through the different kinds of mortices, dovetail, and so on—just as a medieval apprentice would have done.

LAURA: Well, but ….

ALDOUS: Then when we had done all this sort of exercise, then we were allowed to do what we wanted—to make a sledge or a box or a bookcase—and we did it—but always up to the very highest standards. I mean, there was absolutely no nonsense of these things being nailed together; these things were always done dovetailed.

LAURA: But here they don't do that—even professional carpenters.

ALDOUS: Good cabinet work is still done in this way, but of course nowadays it isn't really—I mean, it's quite different.

LAURA: But in this school they don't do anything: they just stay there all afternoon just running around.

ALDOUS : Well, one of the problems is wages. I mean, there was this excellent man who did all the odd jobs around the school, but who

was an old-time artisan who got through all this himself. But he was a very shrewd man: it was a pleasure to be with him. And he could talk; and he had delightful phrases—like when he sharpened a tool he said, “Now it is sharp enough to cut off a dead mouse’s whiskers without its waking up.” But all that is gone now. But what shouldn’t have gone is the perfectly sensible thing of providing boys with something to do.

LAURA: Shall I make us soup? Would you like some soup?

ALDOUS: Yes, that would be nice.

Chapter 36

1962
Letters

Huxley maintained an even busier lecturing schedule this year, despite the recurrence of cancer which necessitated minor surgery and further radiation treatments. Besides his talks at universities, he spoke at a conference on hypnosis, to physicists at Los Alamos, to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and to the World Academy of Arts and Science in Belgium. He also found time to visit the Apollo Space Center in Los Angeles, and his boyhood home in Surrey. The Royal Society of Literature honored him with the title of Companion in Literature, a title also held by Churchill, Maugham and Masefield, who were alive at that time. Island *was published; and he began what was to be his last book.*

In his letters Huxley discusses the nature of the "unmediated experience" of psychedelics, the Tantric use of LSD and mushrooms, and responds to the Maharaja of Kashmir, who after reading Island *writes to ask where he might obtain psychedelic drugs. He is described by Claire Nicolas White in Bedford (p.* 694*) as reading aloud from* The Doors of Perception *to his niece's children in their Long Island home while they "listened spell-bound, and one of them drew his portrait."*

TO DR. TIMOTHY LEAKY [SMITH 888]

2533 Hillegass,
Berkeley 4, *Cal.*
11 February, 1962

DEAR TIM,

I forgot, in my last letter, to answer your question about Tantra. There are enormous books on the subject by "Arthur Avalon" (Sir John Woodroffe), which one can dip into with some profit. Then there is a chapter on it in Heinrich Zimmer's *Philosophies of India.* The fullest scholarly treatment, on a manageable scale, is in Mircea Eliade's various books on Yoga. See also Conze's *Buddhist Texts.* As far as one can understand it, Tantra seems to be a strange mixture of superstition and magic with sublime philosophy and acute philosophical insights.

There is an endless amount of ritual and word-magic. But the basic ideal seems to me the highest possible ideal—enlightenment, not apart from the world (as with the Vedantists and the Nirvana-addicts of the Hinayana School of Buddhists) but within the world, through the world, by means of the ordinary processes of living. Tantra teaches a yoga of sex, a yoga of eating (even eating forbidden foods and drinking forbidden drinks). The sacramentalizing of common life, so that every event may become a means whereby enlightenment can be realized, is achieved, essentially, through constant awareness. This is the ultimate yoga—being aware, conscious even of the unconscious—on every level from the physiological to the spiritual. In this context see the list of 112 exercises in awareness, extracted fiom a Tantril text and printed at the end of *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* [by Paul Reps] (now in paperback). The whole of "Gestalt Therapy" is anticipated in these exercises—and the therapy is not merely for the abnormal, it is above all a therapy for the much graver sickness of insensitiveness and ignorance which we call "normality" or "mental health." LSD and the mushrooms should be used, it seems to me, in context of this basic Tantric idea of the yoga of total awareness, leading to enlightenment within the world of everyday experience—which of course becomes the world of miracle and beauty and divine mystery when experience is what it always ought to be.

Yours,
Aldous

TO REID GARDNER [SMITH 902]

At 31 Pond Street,
Hampstead, N.W. 3
18 September, 1962

DEAR MR. GARDNER,

… I did not know that [Robert] Graves had written on psilocybin, and must read his article.[1] In experiments with LSD and psilocybin subsequent to the mescalin experience described in *Doors of Perception,* I have known that sense of affectionate solidarity with the people around me, and with the universe at large—also the sense of the world's fundamental All Rightness, in spite of pain, death and bereavement. This All Rightness can be expressed in words or other symbols—but its nature cannot be conveyed to anyone who had not gone through the unmediated experience. And can the experience be induced by even the most transportingly poetical words? I have never found that it could be so induced—at the most, only prepared for. (Incidentally, mescalin, LSD and psilocybin all produce a state of affairs in which verbalizing and conceptualizing are in some sort by-

passed. One can talk about the experience—but always with the knowledge that "the rest is silence.")

When I am back in California, I hope you will come and see me.

Sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

TO H. H. MAHARAJA DR. KARAN SINGH, OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR [SMITH 911]

6233 Mulholland Highway,
Los Angeles 28, California
22 December, 1962

YOUR HIGHNESS,

Thank you for your kind letter. *Island* is a kind of pragmatic dream —a fantasy with detailed and (conceivably) practical instructions for making the imagined and desirable harmonization of European and Indian insights become a fact. But alas, in spite of these pragmatic aspects, the book still remains a dream—far removed (as I sadly made clear in the final paragraphs of the story) from our present reality. And yet, if we weren't all so busy trying to do something else, we *could,* I believe, make this world a place fit for fully human beings to live in.

As for the "psychodelic" drugs, LSD, mescalin, psilocybin—these are in short supply and available only to research workers. I have no idea whether any research in this area is being carried on in one of the Indian Universities. You could find out by writing to the Sandoz Company, Basel, Switzerland (the manufacturers of LSD and psilocybin).

Another possibility:—my friend Dr. Timothy Leary, Department of Psychology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A. is conducting research on a large scale. It is possible that he might like to have an opportunity of working with the psychodelics in relation to subjects brought up within another culture than his own. If you could put a house at his disposal for a few weeks he might like to come to India and make this socio-psychological experiment. And if and when I come again to your country I will certainly remember your kind invitation.

Aldous Huxley

Chapter 37

1962
Moksha
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Huxley's last novel—the crowning work of his final decade—took him five years to write. For perhaps the only time in his writing career he questioned his creative ability to successfully "poetize and dramatize the intellectual material and create a work which would be simultaneously funny, tragic, lyrical and profound" (letter to Matthew Huxley, 20 Aug. 1959). *To Osmond (22 June* 1958) *he described the task as "trying to imagine what could be done to create a good society, dedicated to eliciting all the latent powers and gifts of individuals… ." He worked into the book some of Laura's psychotherapy techniques. Island is dedicated to her;* The Doors of Perception *was dedicated to Maria; as Sybille Bedford notes, these are the only books among the nearly fifty Aldous published which bear dedications.*

The Islanders—the Palanese—use a drug called moksha: *a kind of perfected psychedelic in the form of a cultivated yellow mushroom growing in the mountains. The substance is also called "moksha-medicine" and provides "the full-blown mystical experience." Unlike the* soma *of* Brave New World, moksha *is not for escapists: a major ethic of the Islanders is "paying attention." In a rite-of-passage ceremony in which the drug is given to Palanese youth, the guide reveals its essential message: "Liberation …the ending of sorrow, ceasing to be what you ignorantly think you are and becoming what you are in fact. For a little while, thanks to the* moksha-medicine, *you will know what it's like to be what in fact you are, what in fact you always have been."*

"SEX IS DIFFERENT here," Murugan insisted.

"Because of the yoga of love?" Will asked, remembering the little nurse's rapturous face.

The boy nodded. "They've got something that makes them think they're perfectly happy, and they don't want anything else."

"What a blessed state!"

"There's nothing blessed about it," Murugan snapped. "It's just stupid and disgusting. No progress, only sex, sex, sex. And of course that beastly dope they're all given."

"Dope?" Will repeated in some astonishment. Dope in a place where Susila had said there were no addicts? "What kind of dope?"

"It's made out of toadstools. *Toadstools!"* He spoke in a comical caricature of the Rani's vibrant tone of outraged spirituality.

"Those lovely red toadstools that gnomes used to sit on?"

"No, these are yellow. People used to go out and collect them in the mountains. Nowadays the things are grown in special fungus beds at the High Altitude Experimental Station. Scientifically cultivated dope. Pretty, isn't it?"

A door slammed and there was a sound of voices, of footsteps approaching along a corridor. Abruptly, the indignant spirit of the Rani took flight, and Murugan was once again the conscience-stricken school-boy furtively trying to cover up his delinquencies. In a trice *Elementary Ecology* had taken the place of Sears, Roebuck, and the suspiciously bulging briefcase was under the table. A moment later, stripped to the waist and shining like oiled bronze with the sweat of labor in the noonday sun, Vijaya came striding into the room. Behind him came Dr. Robert. With the air of a model student, interrupted in the midst of his reading by trespassers from the frivolous outside world, Murugan looked up from his book. Amused, Will threw himself at once whole-heartedly into the part that had been assigned to him.

"It was I who got here too early," he said in response to Vijaya's apologies for their being so late. "With the result that our young friend here hasn't been able to get on with his lessons. We've been talking our heads off."

"What about?" Dr. Robert asked.

"Everything. Cabbages, kings, motor scooters, pendulous abdomens. And when you came in, we'd just embarked on toadstools. Murugan was telling me about the fungi that are used here as a source of dope."

"What's in a name?" said Dr. Robert, with a laugh. "Answer, practically everything. Having had the misfortune to be brought up in Europe, Murugan calls it dope and feels about it all the disapproval that, by conditioned reflex, the dirty word evokes. We, on the contrary, give the stuff good names—the *moksha*-medicine, the reality revealer, the truth-and-beauty pill. And we know, by direct experience, that the good names are deserved. Whereas our young friend here has no first-hand knowledge of the stuff and can't be persuaded even to give it a try. For him, it's dope and dope is something that, by definition, no decent person ever indulges in."

"What does His Highness say to that?" Will asked.

Murugan shook his head. "All it gives you is a lot of illusions," he muttered. "Why should I go out of my way to be made a fool of?"

"Why indeed?" said Vijaya with good-humored irony. "Seeing that, in your normal condition, you alone of the human race are never

made a fool of and never have illusions about anything!"

"I never said that," Murugan protested. "All I mean is that I don't want any of your false *samadhi*."

"How do you know it's false?" Dr. Robert enquired.

"Because the real thing only comes to people after years and years of meditation and *tapas* and … well, you know—not going with women."

"Murugan," Vijaya explained to Will, "is one of the Puritans. He's outraged by the fact that, with four hundred milligrams of *moksha*-medicine in their bloodstreams, even beginners—yes, and even boys and girls who make love together—can catch a glimpse of the world as it looks to someone who has been liberated from his bondage to the ego."

"But it isn't real," Murugan insisted.

"Not real!" Dr. Robert repeated. "You might as well say that the experience of feeling well isn't real."

"You're begging the question," Will objected. "An experience can be real in relation to something going on inside your skull but completely irrelevant to anything outside."

"Of course," Dr. Robert agreed.

"Do you know what goes on inside your skull, when you've taken a dose of the mushroom?"

"We know a little."

"And we're trying all the time to find out more," Vijaya added.

"For example," said Dr. Robert, "we've found that the people whose EEG doesn't show any alpha-wave activity when they're relaxed aren't likely to respond significantly to the *moksha-medicine*. That means that, for about fifteen per cent of the population, we have to find other approaches to liberation."

"Another thing we're just beginning to understand," said Vijaya, "is the neurological correlate of these experiences. What's happening in the brain when you're having a vision? And what's happening when you pass from a premystical to a genuinely mystical state of mind?"

"Do you know?" Will asked.

" 'Know' is a big word. Let's say we're in a position to make some plausible guesses. Angels and New Jerusalems and Madonnas and Future Buddhas—they're all related to some kind of unusual stimulation of the brain areas of primary projection—the visual cortex, for example. Just how the moksha-medicine produces those unusual stimuli we haven't yet found out. The important fact is that, somehow or other, it does produce them. And somehow or other, it also does something unusual to the silent areas of the brain, the areas not specifically concerned with perceiving, or moving, or feeling."

"And how do the silent areas respond?" Will inquired.

"Let's start with what they *don't* respond with. They don't respond with visions or auditions, they don't respond with telepathy or clairvoyance or any other kind of parapsychological performance. None of that amusing premystical stuff. Their response is the full-blown mystical experience. You know—One in all and All in one. The basic experience with its corollaries—boundless compassion, fathomless mystery and meaning."

"Not to mention joy," said Dr. Robert, "inexpressible joy."

"And the whole caboodle is inside your skull," said Will. "Strictly private. No reference to any external fact except a toadstool."

"Not real," Murugan chimed in. "That's exactly what I was trying to say."

"You're assuming," said Dr. Robert, "that the brain *produces* consciousness. I'm assuming that it transmits consciousness. And my explanation is no more farfetched than yours. How on earth can a set of events belonging to one order be experienced as a set of events belonging to an entirely different and incommensurable order? Nobody has the faintest idea. All one can do is to accept the facts and concoct hypotheses. And one hypothesis is just about as good, philosophically speaking, as another. You say that the? moksha-medicine does something to the silent areas of the brain which causes them to produce a set of subjective events to which people have given the name 'mystical experience.' I say that the moksha-medicine does something to the silent areas of the brain which opens some kind of neurological sluice and so allows a larger volume of Mind with a large 'M' to flow into your mind with a small 'm.' You can't demonstrate the truth of your hypothesis, and I can't demonstrate the truth of mine. And even if you could prove that I'm wrong, would it make any practical difference?"

"I'd have thought it would make all the difference," said Will.

"Do you like music?" Dr. Robert asked.

"More than most things."

"And what, may I ask, does Mozart's G-Minor Quintet refer to? Does it refer to Allah? Or Tao? Or the second person of the Trinity? Or the Atman-Brahman?"

Will laughed. "Let's hope not."

"But that doesn't make the experience of the G-Minor Quintet any less rewarding. Well, it's the same with the kind of experience that you get with the *moksha-medicine,* or through prayer and fasting and spiritual exercises. Even if it doesn't refer to anything outside itself, it's still the most important thing that ever happened to you. Like music, only incomparably more so. And if you give the experience a chance, if you're prepared to go along with it, the results are incomparably more therapeutic and transforming. So maybe the whole

thing does happen inside one's skull. Maybe it *is* private and there's no unitive knowledge of anything but one's own physiology. Who cares? The fact remains that the experience can open one's eyes and make one blessed and transform one's whole life." There was a long silence. "Let me tell you something," he resumed, turning to Murugan. "Something I hadn't intended to talk about to anybody. But now I feel that perhaps I have a duty, a duty to the throne, a duty to Pala and all its people-an obligation to tell you about this very private experience. Perhaps the telling may help you to be a little more understanding about your country and its ways." He was silent for a moment; then in a quietly matter-of-fact tone, "I suppose you know about my wife," he went on.

His face still averted, Murugan nodded. "I was sorry," he mumbled, "to hear she was so ill."

"It's a matter of a few days now," said Dr. Robert. "Four or five at the most. But she's still perfectly lucid, perfectly conscious of what's happening to her. Yesterday she asked me if we could take the *moksha*-medicine together. We'd taken it together," he added parenthetically, "once or twice each year for the last thirty-seven years—ever since we decided to get married. And now once more—for the last time, the last, last time. There was a risk involved, because of the damage to the liver. But we decided it was a risk worth taking. And as it turned out, we were right. The *moksha-medicme*—the dope, as you prefer to call it—hardly upset her at all. All that happened to her was the mental transformation."

He was silent, and Will suddenly became aware of the squeak and scrabble of caged rats and, through the open window, the babel of tropical life and the call of a distant mynah bird. "Here and now, boys. Here and now …"

"You're like that mynah," said Dr. Robert at last. "Trained to repeat words you don't understand or know the reason for, '*It isn't real. It isn't real.'* But if you'd experienced what Lakshmi and I went through yesterday you'd know better. You'd know it was much more real than what you call reality. More real than what you're thinking and feeling at this moment. More real than the world before your eyes. But *not real* is what you've been taught to say. *Not real, not real"*. Dr. Robert laid a hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder. "You've been told that we're just a set of self-indulgent dope takers, wallowing in illusions and false *samadhis*. Listen, Murugan—forget all the bad language that's been pumped into you. Forget it at least to the point of making a single experiment. Take four hundred milligrams of moksha-medicine and find out for yourself what it does, what it can tell you about your own nature, about this strange world you've got to live in, learn in, suffer in, and finally die in. Yes, even you will have to die

one day—maybe fifty years from now, maybe tomorrow. Who knows? But it's going to happen, and one's a fool if one doesn't prepare for it." He turned to Will. "Would you like to come along while we take our shower and get into some clothes?"

Chapter 38

1963
Letters

The last year of Huxley's life began with the completion of Literature and Science, *published in September. Recurrence of cancer and renewed radiation therapy forced him to cancel some lectures, but he managed to travel once more to Europe for a meeting of the World Academy of Arts and Science, for whom he planned to edit a volume on human resources with Osmond. He gave his thoughts on differences between individual and group psychedelic experience to the editor of* Psychedelic Review, *and passed on Osmond's warning about bootlegged LSD to Leary at Harvard, to whom he responded favorably on the idea of a training center devoted to consciousness expansion (The Castalia Foundation was founded in Millbrook, N.Y. in* 1964).

Huxley grew progressively weaker; his last months were spent at home working on what was to be his last article: "Shakespeare and Religion." On the final page Huxley wrote: "We must continually be on the watch for ways in which we may enlarge our consciousness."

TO DR. HUMPHRY OSMOND [SMITH 915]

6233 Mulholland,
L.A. 28, Cal.
7 January, 1963

DEAR HUMPHRY,

Thank you for your letter. A good example of what happens to a man when he gets too much inspiration is provided by Christopher Smart. "Jubilate Agno" is the product of an acute phase of his mental illness, when he had no control over his pre-conscious mind and its torrent of images, notions, words and rhythms. *David* and the "Nativity" poem were written when he was crazy enough to forget that he was a product of 18th century conditioning, but not so crazy as to be unable to organize his automatic writing artistically. And then there are the boring, conventional poems that he produced when he was too sane, too well adjusted to the 18th century. Too much and too frequent LSD would probably be fatal to art—as fatal as no LSD or none of its spontaneously occurring equivalent.

Let me have your address in Princeton so that I may contact you there if and when I go to the not-so-gorgeous East.

My love to Jane and the children.

Yours affectionately,
Aldous

TO PAUL LEE [1]

6233 Mulholland
L.A. 28, Cal.
3 March, 1963

DEAR MR. LEE:

Thank you for your letter and invitation to contribute an article to your review. At the moment I cannot undertake any new commitments; for I have too much to do as it is.

I didn't see Buber's article for I don't read the *Review of Metaphysics* and the relevant issue was not sent to me. I have written about the psychodelics several times since the publication of *The Doors of Perception,* which describes a first and somewhat limited experience with mescaline.

As for privacy—all immediate experience is strictly private. Nobody can *experience* another's pain or pleasure or way of looking at the world. All one can experience is a set of clues and symbols, through which, at one or more removes, one may infer the experience of another person. On the non-verbal level there is either the loneliness of the isolated ego, or the Aloneness of the mind that has broken out of its prison of cultural conditioning and egotism and is as fully receptive to given reality, on every level, as it is possible for the human creature to be. I have had hardly any experience of psychodelics in a group, but presume that, when there is a good rapport, this is due to the fact that the chemical has transformed a group of insulated lonelinesses into a group of open & receptive Alonenesses.

Sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

TO DR. TIMOTHY LEAKY [SMITH 929]

6233 Mulholland,
L.A. 28, Cal
20 July, 1963

DEAR TIM,

Thank you for your letters. I think the idea of a school is excellent, for what needs exploring, more than anything else, is the problem of fruitfully relating what Wordsworth calls “wise passiveness” to wise activity—receptivity and immediate experience to concept-making and the projection upon experience of intelligible order. How do we make the best of *both* the worlds described in Wordsworth’s “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned”? That is what has to be discovered. And one should make use of all the available resources-the best methods of formal teaching and also LSD, hypnosis (used, among other things, to help people to re-enter the LSD state without having recourse to a chemical), time distortion (to speed up the learning process), auto-conditioning for control of autonomic processes and heightening of physical and psychological resistance to disease and trauma etc etc… .

Ever yours,
Aldous

Chapter 39

1963
Culture and the Individual

ALDOUS HUXLEY

In offering this essay to the editors of the first popular anthology on LSD, Huxley "deliberately … treated in more general terms the whole problem of the individual's relation to his culture—a problem in whose solution the psychodelics can undoubtedly play their part" (Letter to T. Learyy 3 June 1963). *The value of psychedelic substances lies in "potentiating* [*an individual's*] *non-verbal education" allowing him to transcend his social conditioning and consequently bring about necessary cultural reforms, Huxley calls for "empirical . . . large-scale experiment" in the limited time left to us.*

BETWEEN CULTURE and the individual the relationship is, and always has been, strangely ambivalent. We are at once the beneficiaries of our culture and its victims. Without culture, and without that precondition of all culture, language, man would be no more than another species of baboon. It is to language and culture that we owe our humanity. And "What a piece of work is a man!" says Hamlet: "How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! … in action how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" But, alas, in the intervals of being noble, rational and potentially infinite,

man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority.
Most ignorant of what he is most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

Genius and angry ape, player of fantastic tricks and godlike reasoner—in all these roles individuals are the products of a language and a culture. Working on the twelve or thirteen billion neurons of a human brain, language and culture have given us law, science, ethics, philosophy; have made possible all the achievements of talent and of sanctity. They have also given us fanaticism, superstition and dogmatic bumptiousness; nationalistic idolatry and mass murder in

the name of God; rabble-rousing propaganda and organized lying. And, along with the salt of the earth, they have given us, generation after generation, countless millions of hypnotized conformists, the predestined victims of power-hungry rulers who are themselves the victims of all that is most senseless and inhuman in their cultural tradition.

Thanks to language and culture, human behavior can be incomparably more intelligent, more original, creative and flexible than the behavior of animals, whose brains are too small to accommodate the number of neurons necessary for the invention of language and the transmission of accumulated knowledge. But, thanks again to language and culture, human beings often behave with a stupidity, a lack of realism, a total inappropriateness, of which animals are incapable.

Trobriand Islander or Bostonian, Sicilian Catholic or Japanese Buddhist, each of us is born into some culture and passes his life within its confines. Between every human consciousness and the rest of the world stands an invisible fence, a network of traditional thinking-and-feeling patterns, of secondhand notions that have turned into axioms, of ancient slogans revered as divine revelations. What we see through the meshes of this net is never, of course, the unknowable "thing in itself." It is not even, in most cases, the thing as it impinges upon our senses and as our organism spontaneously reacts to it. What we ordinarily take in and respond to is a curious mixture of immediate experience with culturally conditioned symbol, of sense impressions with preconceived ideas about the nature of things. And by most people the symbolic elements in this cocktail of awareness are felt to be more important than the elements contributed by immediate experience. Inevitably so, for, to those who accept their culture totally and uncritically, words in the familiar language do not stand (however inadequately) for things. On the contrary, things stand for familiar words. Each unique event of their ongoing life is instantly and automatically classified as yet another concrete illustration of one of the verbalized, culture-hallowed abstractions drummed into their heads by childhood conditioning.

It goes without saying that many of the ideas handed down to us by the transmitters of culture are eminently sensible and realistic. (If they were not, the human species would now be extinct.) But, along with these useful concepts, every culture hands down a stock of unrealistic notions, some of which never made any sense, while others may once have possessed survival value, but have now, in the changed and changing circumstances of ongoing history, become completely irrelevant. Since human beings respond to symbols as promptly and unequivocally as they respond to the stimuli of unmediated

experience, and since most of them naively believe that culture-hallowed words about things are as real as, or even realer than their perceptions of the things themselves, these outdated or intrinsically nonsensical notions do enormous harm. Thanks to the realistic ideas handed down by culture, mankind has survived and, in certain fields, progresses. But thanks to the pernicious nonsense drummed into every individual in the course of his acculturation, mankind, though surviving and progressing, has always been in trouble. History is the record, among other things, of the fantastic and generally fiendish tricks played upon itself by culture-maddened humanity. And the hideous game goes on.

What can, and what should, the individual do to improve his ironically equivocal relationship with the culture in which he finds himself embedded? How can he continue to enjoy the benefits of culture without, at the same time, being stupefied or frenziedly intoxicated by its poisons? How can he become discriminatingly acculturated, rejecting what is silly or downright evil in his conditioning, and holding fast to that which makes for humane and intelligent behavior?

A culture cannot be discriminatingly accepted, much less be modified, except by persons who have seen through it—by persons who have cut holes in the confining stockade of verbalized symbols and so are able to look at the world and, by reflection, at themselves in a new and relatively unprejudiced way. Such persons are not merely born; they must also be made. But how?

In the field of formal education, what the would-be hole cutter needs is knowledge. Knowledge of the past and present history of cultures in all their fantastic variety, and knowledge about the nature and limitations, the uses and abuses, of language. A man who knows that there have been many cultures, and that each culture claims to be the best and truest of all, will find it hard to take too seriously the boastings and dogmatizings of his own tradition. Similarly, a man who knows how symbols are related to experience, and who practices the kind of linguistic self-control taught by the exponents of General Semantics, is unlikely to take too seriously the absurd or dangerous nonsense that, within every culture, passes for philosophy, practical wisdom and political argument.

As a preparation for hole cutting, this kind of intellectual education is certainly valuable, but no less certainly insufficient. Training on the verbal level needs to be supplemented by training in wordless experiencing. We must learn how to be mentally silent, must cultivate the art of pure receptivity.

To be silently receptive—how childishly simple that seems! But in fact, as we very soon discover, how difficult! The universe in which

men pass their lives is the creation of what Indian philosophy calls *Nama-Rupa,* Name and Form. Reality is a continuum, a fathomlessly mysterious and infinite Something, whose outward aspect is what we call Matter and whose inwardness is what we call Mind. Language is a device for taking the mystery out of Reality and making it amenable to human comprehension and manipulation. Acculturated man breaks up the continuum, attaches labels to a few of the fragments, projects the labels into the outside world and thus creates for himself an all-too-human universe of separate objects, each of which is merely the embodiment of a name, a particular illustration of some traditional abstraction. What we perceive takes on the pattern of the conceptual lattice through which it has been filtered. Pure receptivity is difficult because man's normal waking consciousness is always culturally conditioned. But normal waking consciousness, as William James pointed out many years ago, "is but one type of consciousness, while all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these forms of consciousness disregarded."

Like the culture by which it is conditioned, normal waking consciousness is at once our best friend and a most dangerous enemy. It helps us to survive and make progress; but at the same time it prevents us from actualizing some of our most valuable potentialities and, on occasion, gets us into all kinds of trouble. To become fully human, man, proud man, the player of fantastic tricks, must learn to get out of his own way: only then will his infinite faculties and angelic apprehension get a chance of coming to the surface. In Blake's words, we must "cleanse the doors of perception"; for when the doors of perception are cleansed, "everything appears to man as it is—infinite." To normal waking consciousness things are the strictly finite and insulated embodiments of verbal labels. How can we break the habit of automatically imposing our prejudices and the memory of culture-hallowed words upon immediate experience? Answer: by the practice of pure receptivity and mental silence. These will cleanse the doors of perception and, in the process, make possible the emergence of other than normal forms of consciousness—aesthetic consciousness, visionary consciousness, mystical consciousness. Tlianks to culture we are the heirs to vast accumulations of knowledge, to a priceless treasure of logical and scientific method, to thousands upon thousands of useful pieces of technological and organizational know-how. But the human mind-body possesses other sources of information, makes

use of other types of reasoning, is gifted with an intrinsic wisdom that is independent of cultural conditioning.

Wordsworth writes that "our meddling intellect [that part of the mind which uses language to take the mystery out of Reality] misshapes the beauteous forms of things: we murder to dissect." Needless to say, we cannot get along without our meddling intellect. Verbalized conceptual thinking is indispensable. But even when they are used well, verbalized concepts misshape "the beauteous forms of things." And when (as happens so often) they are used badly, they misshape our lives by rationalizing ancient stupidities, by instigating mass murder, persecution and the playing of all the other fantastically ugly tricks that make the angels weep. Wise nonverbal passiveness is an antidote to unwise verbal activity and a necessary corrective to wise verbal activity. Verbalized concepts about experience need to be supplemented by direct, unmediated acquaintance with events as they present themselves to us.

It is the old story of the letter and the spirit. The letter is necessary, but must never be taken too seriously, for, divorced from the spirit, it cramps and finally kills. As for the spirit, it "bloweth where it listeth" and, if we fail to consult the best cultural charts, we may be blown off our course and suffer shipwreck. At present most of us make the worst of both worlds. Ignoring the freely blowing winds of the spirit and relying on cultural maps which may be centuries out-of-date, we rush full speed ahead under the high-pressure steam of our own overweening self-confidence. The tickets we have sold ourselves assure us that our destination is some port in the Islands of the Blest. In fact it turns out, more often than not, to be Devil's Island.

Self-education on the nonverbal level is as old as civilization. "Be still and know that I am God"—for the visionaries and mystics of every time and every place, this has been the first and greatest of the commandments. Poets listen to their Muse and in the same way the visionary and the mystic wait upon inspiration in a state of wise passiveness, of dynamic vacuity. In the Western tradition this state is called "the prayer of simple regard." At the other end of the world it is described in terms that are psychological rather than theistic. In mental silence we "look into our own Self-Nature," we "hold fast to the Not-Thought which lies in thought." we "become that which essentially we have always been." By wise activity we can acquire useful analytical knowledge about the world, knowledge that can be communicated by means of verbal symbols. In the state of wise passiveness we make possible the emergence of forms of consciousness other than the utilitarian consciousness of normal waking life. Useful analytical knowledge about the world is replaced by some kind of biologically inessential but spiritually enlightening acquaintance with

the world. For example, there can be direct aesthetic acquaintance with the world as beauty. Or there can be direct acquaintance with the intrinsic strangeness of existence, its wild implausibility. And finally there can be direct acquaintance with the world's unity. This immediate mystical experience of being at one with the fundamental Oneness that manifests itself in the infinite diversity of things and minds, can never be adequately expressed in words. Like visionary experience, the experience of the mystic can be talked about only from the outside. Verbal symbols can never convey its inwardness.

It is through mental silence and the practice of wise passiveness that artists, visionaries and mystics have made themselves ready for the immediate experience of the world as beauty, as mystery and as unity. But silence and wise passiveness are not the only roads leading out of the all-too-human universe created by normal, culture-conditioned consciousness. In *Expostulation and Reply,* Wordsworth's bookish friend, Matthew, reproaches the poet because

> *You look round on your Mother Earth,*
> *As if she for no purpose bore you;*
> *As if you were her first-born birth,*
> *And none have lived before you!*

From the point of view of normal waking consciousness, this is sheer intellectual delinquency. But it is what the artist, the visionary and the mystic must do and, in fact, have always done. "Look at a person, a landscape, any common object, as though you were seeing it for the first time." This is one of the exercises in immediate, unverbalized awareness prescribed in the ancient texts of Tantric Buddhism. Artists, visionaries and mystics refuse to be enslaved to the culture-conditioned habits of feeling, thought and action which their society regards as right and natural. Whenever this seems desirable, they deliberately refrain from projecting upon reality those hallowed word patterns with which all human minds are so copiously stocked. They know as well as anyone else that culture and the language in which any given culture is rooted, are absolutely necessary and that, without them, the individual would not be human. But more vividly than the rest of mankind they also know that, to be *fully* human, the individual must learn to decondition himself, must be able to cut holes in the fence of verbalized symbols that hems him in.

In the exploration of the vast and mysterious world of human potentialities the great artists, visionaries and mystics have been trail-blazing pioneers. But where they have been, others can follow. Potentially, all of us are "infinite in faculties and like gods in apprehension." Modes of consciousness different from normal waking

consciousness are within the reach of anyone who knows how to apply the necessary stimuli. The universe in which a human being lives can be transfigured into a new creation. We have only to cut a hole in the fence and look around us with what the philosopher, Plotinus, describes as "that other kind of seeing, which everyone has but few make use of."

Within our current systems of education, training on the nonverbal level is meager in quantity and poor in quality. Moreover, its purpose, which is simply to help its recipients to be more "like gods in apprehension" is neither clearly stated nor consistently pursued. We could and, most emphatically, we should do better in this very important field than we are doing now. The practical wisdom of earlier civilizations and the findings of adventurous spirits within our own tradition and in our own time are freely available. With their aid a curriculum and a methodology of nonverbal training could be worked out without much difficulty. Unhappily most persons in authority have a vested interest in the maintenance of cultural fences. They frown upon hole cutting as subversive and dismiss Plotinus' "other kind of seeing" as a symptom of mental derangement. If an effective system of nonverbal education could be worked out, would the authorities allow it to be widely applied? It is an open question.

From the nonverbal world of culturally uncontaminated consciousness we pass to the subverbal world of physiology and biochemistry. A human being is a temperament and a product of cultural conditioning; he is also, and primarily, an extremely complex and delicate biochemical system, whose inwardness, as the system changes from one state of equilibrium to another, is changing consciousness. It is because each one of us is a biochemical system that (according to Housman)

> *Malt does more than Milton can*
> *To justify God's ways to man.*

Beer achieves its theological triumphs because, in William James, words, "Drunkenness is the great exciter of the *Yes* function in man." And he adds that "It is part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something that we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only in the fleeting earlier phases of what, in its totality, is so degrading a poisoning." The tree is known by its fruits, and the fruits of too much reliance upon ethyl alcohol as an exciter of the *Yes* function are bitter indeed. No less bitter are the fruits of reliance upon such habit-forming sedatives, hallucinogens and mood elevators as opium and its derivatives, as cocaine (once so blithely recommended to his friends and patients by

Dr. Freud), as the barbiturates and amphetamine. But in recent years the pharmacologists have extracted or synthesized several compounds that powerfully affect the mind without doing any harm to the body, either at the time of ingestion or, through addiction, later on. Through these new psychedelics, the subject's normal waking consciousness may be modified in many different ways. It is as though, for each individual, his deeper self decides which kind of experience will be most advantageous. Having decided, it makes use of the drug's mindchanging powers to give the person what he needs. Thus, if it would be good for him to have deeply buried memories uncovered, deeply buried memories will duly be uncovered. In cases where this is of no great importance, something else will happen. Normal waking consciousness may be replaced by aesthetic consciousness, and the world will be perceived in all its unimaginable beauty, all the blazing intensity of its "thereness." And aesthetic consciousness may modulate into visionary consciousness. Thanks to yet another kind of seeing, the world will now reveal itself as not only unimaginably beautiful, but also fathomlessly mysterious—as a multitudinous abyss of possibility forever actualizing itself into unprecedented forms. New insights into a new, transfigured world of givenness, new combinations of thought and fantasy—the stream of novelty pours through the world in a torrent, whose every drop is charged with meaning. There are the symbols whose meaning lies outside themselves in the given facts of visionary experience, and there are these given facts which signify only themselves. But "only themselves" is also "no less than the divine ground of all being." "Nothing but this" is at the same time "the Suchness of all." And now the aesthetic and the visionary consciousness deepen into mystical consciousness. The world is now seen as an infinite diversity that is yet a unity, and the beholder experiences himself as being at one with the infinite Oneness that manifests itself, totally present, at every point of space, at every instant in the flux of perpetual perishing and perpetual renewal. Our normal word-conditioned consciousness creates a universe of sharp distinctions, black and white, this and that, me and you and it. In the mystical consciousness of being at one with infinite Oneness, there is a reconciliation of opposites, a perception of the Not-Particular in particulars, a transcending of our ingrained subject-object relationships with things and persons; there is an immediate experience of our solidarity with all being and a kind of organic conviction that in spite of the inscrutabilities of fate, in spite of our own dark stupidities and deliberate malevolence, yes, in spite of all that is so manifestly wrong with the world, it is yet, in some profound, paradoxical and entirely inexpressible way, All Right. For normal waking consciousness, the phrase, "God is Love," is no more than a

piece of wishful positive thinking. For the mystical consciousness, it is a self-evident truth.

Unprecedentedly rapid technological and demographic changes are steadily increasing the dangers by which we are surrounded, and at the same time are steadily diminishing the relevance of the traditional feeling-and-behavior-patterns imposed upon all individuals, rulers and ruled alike, by their culture. Always desirable, widespread training in the art of cutting holes in cultural fences is now the most urgent of necessities. Can such a training be speeded up and made more effective by a judicious use of the physically harmless psychedelics now available? On the basis of personal experience and the published evidence, I believe that it can. In my utopian fantasy, *Island,* I speculated in fictional terms about the ways in which a substance akin to psilocybin could be used to potentiate the nonverbal education of adolescents and to remind adults that the real world is very different from the misshapen universe they have created for themselves by means of their culture-conditioned prejudices. "Having Fun with Fungi"—that was how one waggish reviewer dismissed the matter. But which is better: to have Fun with Fungi or to have Idiocy with Ideology, to have Wars because of Words, to have Tomorrow's Misdeeds out of Yesterday's Miscreeds?

How should the psychedelics be administered? Under what circumstances, with what kind of preparation and follow-up? These are questions that must be answered empirically, by large-scale experiment. Man's collective mind has a high degree of viscosity and flows from one position to another with the reluctant deliberation of an ebbing tide of sludge. But in a world of explosive population increase, of headlong technological advance and of militant nationalism, the time at our disposal is strictly limited. We must discover, and discover very soon, new energy sources for overcoming our society's psychological inertia, better solvents for liquefying the sludgy stickiness of an anachronistic state of mind. On the verbal level an education in the nature and limitations, the uses and abuses of language; on the wordless level an education in mental silence and pure receptivity; and finally, through the use of harmless psychedelics, a course of chemically triggered conversion experiences or ecstasies—these, I believe, will provide all the sources of mental energy, all the solvents of conceptual sludge, that an individual requires. With their aid, he should be able to adapt himself selectively to his culture, rejecting its evils, stupidities and irrelevances, gratefully accepting all its treasures of accumulated knowledge, of rationality, human-heartedness and practical wisdom. If the number of such individuals is sufficiently great, if their quality is sufficiently high, they may be able to pass from discriminating acceptance of their culture to

discriminating change and reform. Is this a hopefully utopian dream? Experiment can give us the answer, for the dream is pragmatic; the Utopian hypotheses can be tested empirically. And in these oppressive times a little hope is surely no unwelcome visitant.

Chapter 40

1963
O Nobly Born!
LAURA HUXLEY

Aldous Huxley's death—in Laura's words—was "a continuation of his own work" and "a last gesture of continuing importance." Huxley had not taken a psychedelic in about two years. In his last weeks he had thought about it but decided to wait until he felt better. His condition worsened; and in his last hours he consciously and courageously followed a program he had tested before both in his life (when Maria died) and his writing (Lakshmïs death in Island). *He asked for LSD—the nearest equivalent at hand to the moksha-medicine. Laura twice administered 100 microgram doses and improvised readings to him from the Leary-Alpert-Metzner manuscript of their soon-to-be-published manual for the psychedelic experience based upon the* Tibetan Book of the Dead. *Aldous died peacefully, fully conscious and apparently without pain, with the doors of his perception cleansed.*

Written originally for a small number of relatives and friends, Laura later incorporated this account into her memoir of her husband. By the mid-1960's, Dr. Eric Kast was relieving the pain and anxiety of his terminally ill patients with LSD.

ALDOUS DIED as he lived, doing his best to develop fully in himself one of the essentials he recommended to others: *Awareness.*

When he realized that the labor of his body leaving this life might lessen his awareness, Aldous prescribed his own medicine or—expressed in another way—his own sacrament.

"The last rites should make one more conscious rather than less conscious," he had often said, "more human rather than less human." In a letter to Dr. Osmond, who had reminded Aldous that six years had passed since their first mescaline experiment, he answered: "Yes, six years since that first experiment. 'O Death in Life, the years that are no more'—and yet also, O Life in Death… ." Also to Osmond: "… My own experience with Maria convinced me that the living can do a great deal to make the passage easier for the dying, to raise the most purely physiological act of human existence to the level of consciousness and perhaps even of spirituality."

All too often, unconscious or dying people are treated as “things,” as though they were not there. But often they are very much there. Although a dying person has fewer and fewer means of expressing what he feels, he still is open to receiving communication. In this sense the very sick or the dying person is much like a child: he cannot tell us how he feels, but he is absorbing our feeling, our voice, and, most of all, our touch. In the infant the greatest channel of communication is the skin. Similarly, for the individual plunged in the immense solitude of sickness and death, the touch of a hand can dispel that solitude, even warmly illuminate that unknown universe. To the “nobly born” as to the “nobly dying,” skin and voice communication may make an immeasurable difference.

Modern psychology has discovered how powerful the birth trauma is to the individual’s life. What about the “death trauma”? If one believes in the continuity of life, should one not give it equal consideration?

The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* gives the greatest importance to the state of consciousness at the time of death. The guide always addresses the dying person with the salute “O Nobly Born!” and urges: “Let not thy mind be distracted.” The guide keeps reminding the dying person not to become entangled in visions, heavenly or hellish, which are not real, but which are only the illusionary projections of his thoughts and emotions, fears and desires. The dying are exhorted “to go on practicing the art of living even while they are dying. Knowing who in fact one is, being conscious of the universal and impersonal life that lives itself through each of us. That’s the art of living, and that’s what one can help the dying to go on practicing. To the very end.”[1]

“O nobly born!” This mark of respect and recognition is uplifting and seems to me more conducive to better life—here or after—than the image of the sinner beating his breast and desperately begging for forgiveness: “What shall I, frail man, be pleading? Who for me be interceding, when the just are mercy needing?”

November 22, 1963, was to be the last day on earth for two men of good will. Although belonging to different generations, different countries, and different backgrounds, both John F. Kennedy and Aldous Huxley had waged a common fight against ignorance and bad will; both dedicated their lives to helping humanity to understand and love itself. They died on the same day: no imagination could be vivid enough to conceive two ways of dying as antipodal as these. Distorted rumors have circulated about Aldous’s death. I reported the actual events of that day in a recording for relatives and a few friends three weeks after Aldous died. These are the facts.

Dear—

There is so much I want to tell you about the last week of Aldous's life, and particularly the last day. What happened is important because it is a conclusion, better, a continuation, of his own work.

First of all, I must confirm to you with complete subjective certainty that Aldous had not consciously considered the fact that he might die very soon until the day he died. Subconsciously it was all there, and you will be able to see this for yourself, because from November 15th until November 22nd I have many of Aldous's remarks on tape. Aldous was never quite willing to give up his writing by hand for dictating or making notes on a recorder. He used a Dictograph only to record passages of literature he liked; he would listen to these in his quiet moments in the evening as he was going to sleep. In the beginning of November, when Aldous was in the hospital, Ginny gave us a recorder—a small thing, easily manageable and practically unnoticeable. After having practiced with it myself a few days, I showed it to Aldous, who was very pleased with it, and from the fifteenth on we used it a little every day, recording his dreams and notes for future writing.

The period from November 15 to the twenty-second marked, it seems to me, a period of intense mental activity for Aldous. We had diminished little by little all the drugs as much as possible—only used pain-killers like Percodan, a little Amytal, and something for nausea. He took also a few injections of ½ cc of Dilaudid, which is a derivative of morphine; the doctor says this is a very small intake of morphine.

Now, to pick up my point again, in his dreams as well as sometimes in his conversation, it seemed obvious and transparent that subconsciously he knew that he was going to die. But not once did he speak of it. This had nothing to do with the idea that some of his friends put forward, that he wanted to spare me. It wasn't this, because Aldous had never been able to play a part, to say a single lie; he was constitutionally unable to lie, and if he wanted to spare me, he could certainly have spoken to Ginny.

During the last two months I gave him almost daily an opportunity, an opening, for speaking about death, but of course this opening was always one that could have been taken in two ways—either toward life or toward death; and he always took it toward life. We read the entire manual of Dr. Leary based on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.*[2] He could have, even jokingly, said: "Don't forget to remind me when the time comes." His comment instead was directed only to the problem of "re-entry" after a psychedelic session. It is true he sometimes said things like, "If I get out of this," in connection with his new ideas of

writing, and wondered when and if he would have the strength to work. He was mentally very active and it seemed that some new levels of his mind were stirring.

The night before he died (Thursday night), about eight o'clock, suddenly an idea came to him.

"Darling," he said, "it just occurs to me that I am imposing on Ginny —having somebody as sick as this in the house with the two children —this is really an imposition."

Ginny was out of the house at the moment, and so I said, "Good, when she comes back I will tell her this—it will be a nice laugh."

"No," he said with unusual insistence. "We should do something about it."

"Well," I replied, keeping it light, "all right, get up. Let's go on a trip."

"No," he said. "It is serious. We must think about it—all these nurses in the house. What we could do, we could take an apartment for this period. Just for this period."

It was very clear what he meant; it was unmistakably clear. He thought he might remain seriously sick for another three or four weeks, and then he could come back and start his normal life again. This idea of starting his normal life occurred quite often. In the last three or four weeks he was several times appalled by his weakness when he realized how much strength he had lost, and how long it would take to be normal again. A few days before, as he was going to sleep, I had asked him: "What are you thinking about?"

"I was thinking that a way must be found to speed up this recovery; it is true I am better, the back is better, but it is depressing not to have the strength to do something that one wants to do."

Now this Thursday night he had remarked about taking an apartment with an unusual energy, but a few minutes later and all that evening I felt he was going down, he was losing ground quickly. Eating was almost out of the question. He had just taken a few spoonfuls of liquid and purée; every time he took anything, it would start the cough. Thursday night I called the doctor and told him the pulse was very high—140; he had a little bit of fever, and my whole feeling was one of the imminence of death. Both the nurse and the doctor said they didn't think this was the case, but that if I wished the doctor would come up to see him that night. Then I returned to Aldous's room and we decided to give him an injection. It was about nine o'clock, and he went to sleep and I told the doctor to come the next morning. Aldous slept until about 2 a.m. and then he had another shot, and I saw him again at six-thirty. I felt that life was leaving, that something was more wrong than usual, although I didn't know exactly

what, and a little later I sent you and Matthew and Ellen and my sister a wire. Then about 9 a.m. Aldous began to be so agitated, so uncomfortable, so restless. He wanted to be moved all the time. Nothing was right. The doctor came about that time and decided to give him a shot which he had given him once before, something that you give intravenously, very slowly. It takes five minutes to give and it is a drug that dilates the bronchial tubes so that respiration is easier.

This drug made him uncomfortable the time before—it must have been three Fridays before—when he had that crisis I wrote you about. But then it helped him. This time it made him feel restless. He couldn't express himself but he was feeling dreadful—nothing was right, no position relieved him. I tried to ask him what was happening. He had difficulty in speaking, but he managed to say, "Just trying to tell you makes it worse." He wanted to be moved all the time. "Move me." "Move my legs." "Move my arms." "Move my bed." He had one of those push-button beds which move up and down from both the head and the foot, and incessantly, it seemed, he wanted to be moved up and down, up and down. We did this again and again and somehow it seemed to give him a little relief, but it was very, very little.

All of a sudden—it must have been then ten o'clock—he could hardly speak, and he whispered he wanted "a big, big piece of paper to write on." I did not want to leave the room to find it, so I took a typewriter tablet that was near by, laid it on a large tray and held it. Aldous wrote, "If I go," and gave a direction for his will.

I knew what he meant. He had signed his will, as I told you, about a week before, and in the will there was a transfer of a life-insurance policy from me to ——. I said to him, "Do you mean that you want to make sure that the life insurance has been transferred?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "The papers for the transfer have just arrived. If you want to sign them you can sign them, but it is not necessary, because you already made it legal in your will."

He heaved a sigh of relief at not having to sign. I had asked him the day before to sign some important papers, and he had said, "Let's wait a little while." This, by the way, was his way now to say that he couldn't do something. If he was asked to eat he would say, "Let's wait a little while." And when I asked him the day before to do some signing that was rather important he said, "Let's wait a little while." He wanted to write you a letter. "And especially about Juliette's book, it's lovely," he had said several times. But when I proposed doing it, he would say, "Yes, in just a little while," in such a tired voice, so totally different from his normal way of doing things at once. So,

when I told him that the signing was not necessary and that all was in order, he gave a sigh of relief.

"If I go." This was the first time that he had said that with reference to *now*. He wrote it. I knew and felt that for the first time he was looking at death—now. About half an hour before, I had called up S. C.,[3] a psychiatrist who was one of the leaders in the use of LSD. I asked him if he had ever given LSD to a man in this condition. He said that he had only done it twice, and in one case it had brought a sort of reconciliation with death, and in the other case it did not make any difference. I asked him if he would advise giving it to Aldous in his condition. I told him how I had offered it several times during the last two months, but Aldous always said that he would wait until he was better.

Dr. C. said, "I don't know-I don't think so. What do you think?"

I said, "I don't know. Shall I offer it to him?"

He said, "I would offer it to him in a very oblique way. Just say, 'What do you think about taking LSD?'"

This vague response had been common to the few researchers in this field whom I had asked, "Do you give LSD *in extremis?"* In *Island* there is the only definite reference I know of. I must have spoken to Dr. C. at about 9:30. Aldous's condition was worsening by the minute —he could not say what he wanted; I could not understand. At a certain point he said something. He said, "Who is eating out of my bowl?" I didn't know what this meant, and I asked him. He managed a faint, whimsical smile and said, "Oh, never mind, it is only a joke." And later on, feeling my need to know a little so I could do something, he said in an agonizing way, "At this point there is so little to share." Then I knew he knew that he was going. However, this inability to express himself was only muscular. His brain was clear and in fact, I feel, at a pitch of activity.

Some time during the morning, a new tank of oxygen was brought in by a young man who had come several times before. He started, rather loudly, to say, "Did you hear that President Kennedy …"

I stopped him with a look. Aldous did not notice, maybe because he was preoccupied about the tip.

"Those tanks are heavy; give him a dollar."

Aldous was always in such a hurry to give tips, as though the opportunity to do it were about to vanish. It was the same feeling today. I answered yes, but I was thinking I did not have a dollar in that room, and where was my purse. Aldous must have felt my hesitation because he repeated, "Give him a dollar. There are some bills in my trousers pocket in the closet." He spoke very low, but quite clearly this time.

Then, I don't know exactly what time it was, he asked me for his tablet and wrote, "Try LSD 100 μ itramuscular." Although, as you see from the reproduction, it is not very clear, I knew that this is what he meant. I read it aloud and he confirmed it. Suddenly, something was very clear to me, after this tortuous talking of the last two months. I knew then, I knew what was to be done. I went quickly to fetch the LSD, which was in the medicine chest in the room across the hall. There is a TV set in that room, which was hardly ever used. But I had been aware, in the last hour or so, that it was on. Now, when I entered the room, Ginny, the doctor, the nurse, and the rest of the household were all looking at television. The thought shot through my mind: "This is madness, these people looking at television when Aldous is dying." A second later, while I was opening the box containing the LSD vial, I heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Only then did I understand the strange behavior of the people that morning.

I said, "I am going to give him a shot of LSD—he asked for it."

The doctor had a moment of agitation—you know very well the uneasiness in the medical mind about this drug. But no "authority," not even an army of authorities, could have stopped me then. I went into Aldous's room with the vial of LSD and prepared a syringe. The doctor asked me if I wanted him to give the shot—maybe because he saw that my hands were trembling. His asking me that made me conscious of my hands, and I said, "No, I must do this." I quieted myself, and when I gave him the shot my hands were firm.

Then, somehow, a great relief came to us both. It was 11:45 when I gave him his first shot of 100 μ I sat near his bed and I said, "Darling, maybe in a little while I will take it with you. Would you like me to take it also in a little while?" I said "a little while" because I had no idea of when I could take it. And he indicated yes. We must keep in mind that by now he was speaking very, very little.

Then I said, "Would you like Matthew to take it with you also?"

And he said yes.

"What about Ellen?"

He said yes. Then I mentioned two or three people who had been working with LSD and he said, "No, no, *basta, basta"*

Then I said, "What about Ginny?"

And he said, "Yes," with emphasis. Then we were quiet. I just sat there without speaking for a while. Aldous was not so agitated physically. He seemed—somehow I felt he knew—we both knew what we were doing, and this had always been a great relief to Aldous. I have seen him at times during his illness upset until he knew what he was going to do; then, the decision taken, however serious, he would make a total change. This enormous feeling of relief would come to him, and he wouldn't be worried at all about it. He would say let's do

it, and we would do it, and he was like a liberated man. And now I had the same feeling: a decision had been made. Suddenly he had accepted the fact of death; now, he had taken this *moksha*-medicine in which he believed. Once again he was doing what he had written in *Island,* and I had the feeling that he was interested and relieved and quiet.

After half an hour, the expression on his face began to change a little, and I asked him if he felt the effect of LSD, and he indicated no. Yet I think that something had taken place already. This was one of Aldous's characteristics. He would always delay acknowledging the effect of any medicine, even when the effect was quite certainly there; unless the effect was very, very strong, he would say no. Now the expression on his face was beginning to look as it did when he had taken the moksha-medicine, when this immense expression of complete bliss and love would come over him. This was not the case now, but there was a change in comparison to what his face had been two hours before. I let another half hour pass, and then I decided to give him another 100 μ. I told him I was going to do it, and he acquiesced. I gave him another shot, and then I began to talk to him. He was very quiet now; he was very quiet and his legs were getting colder; higher and higher I could see purple areas of cyanosis. Then I began to talk to him, saying, "Light and free." Some of these suggestions I had given him at night, in these last few weeks, before he would go to sleep, and now I spoke them more convincingly, more intensely.

"Light and free you let go, darling; forward and up. You are going forward and up; you are going toward the light. Willingly and consciously you are going, willing and consciously, and you are doing this beautifully; you are doing this so beautifully—you are going toward the light—you are going toward the light—you are going toward a greater love—you are going forward and up. It is so easy—it is so beautiful. You are doing it so beautifully, so easily. Light and free. Forward and up. You are going toward Maria's love with my love. You are going toward a greater love than you have ever known. You are going toward the best, the greatest love, and it is easy, it is so easy, and you are doing it so beautifully"

I believe I started to talk to him—it must have been about one or two o'clock. It was very difficult for me to keep track of time. I was very, very near his ear, and I hope I spoke clearly and understandably. Once I asked him, "Do you hear me?" He squeezed my hand; he was hearing me. It was 3:15 p.m. according to the nurse's records. I was tempted to ask more questions, but in the morning he had begged me not to ask any more questions, and the entire feeling was that things were right. I didn't dare to inquire, to disturb, and that was the only

question that I asked: “Do you hear me?”

Later on I asked the same question, but the hand didn’t move any more. Now from two o’clock until the time he died, which was 5:20 p.m., there was complete peace except for once. That must have been about three-thirty or four, when I saw the beginning of struggle in his lower lip. His lower lip began to move as if it were going to struggle for air. Then I gave the direction even more forcefully:

“It is easy, and you are doing this beautifully and consciously, in full awareness, in full awareness, darling, you are going toward the light.”

I repeated these or similar words for the last three or four hours. Once in a while my own emotion would overcome me, but if it did I immediately would leave the bed for two or three minutes, and would come back only when I could control my emotion. The twitching of the lower lip lasted only a little bit, and it seemed to respond completely to what I was saying.

“Easy, easy, and you are doing this willingly and consciously and beautifully—going forward and up, light and free, forward and up toward the light, into the light, into complete love.”

The twitching stopped, the breathing became slower and slower, and there was absolutely not the slightest indication of contraction, of struggle. It was just that the breathing became slower—and slower—and slower; the ceasing of life was not a drama at all, but like a piece of music just finishing so gently in a sempre più piano, dolcemente … and at five-twenty the breathing stopped.

And now, after I have been alone these few days, and less bombarded by other people’s feelings, the meaning of this last day becomes clearer and clearer to me and more and more important. Aldous was appalled, I think (and certainly I am), at the fact that what he wrote in *Island* was not taken seriously. It was treated as a work of science fiction, when it was not fiction, because each one of the ways of living he described in *Island* was not a product of his fantasy, but something that had been tried in one place or another, some of them in our own everyday life. If the way Aldous died were known, it might awaken people to the awareness that not only this, but many other facts described in *Island* are possible here and now. Aldous asking for the *moksha-medicine* while dying is not only a confirmation of his open-mindedness and courage, but as such a last gesture of continuing importance. Such a gesture might be ignorantly misinterpreted, but it is history that Huxleys stop ignorance, before ignorance stops Huxleys.

Now, is his way of dying to remain for us, and only for us, a relief and consolation, or should others also benefit from it? Aren’t we all nobly born and entitled to nobly dying?

Instructions for Use During a Psychedelic Session

FIRST BARDO INSTRUCTIONS

O (name of voyager)
The time has come for you to seek new levels of reality.
Your ego and the *(name)* game are about to cease.
You are about to be set face to face with the Clear Light.
You are about to experience it in its reality.
In the ego-free state, wherein all things are like the void and cloudless sky,
And the naked spotless intellect is like a transparent vacuum;
At this moment, know yourself and abide in that state.

O *(name of voyager),*
That which is called ego-death is coming to you.
Remember:
This is now the hour of death and rebirth;
Take advantage of this temporary death to obtain the perfect state —Enlightenment.
Concentrate on the unity of all living beings.
Hold onto the Clear Light.
Use it to attain understanding and love.
If you cannot maintain the bliss of illumination and if you are slipping back into contact with the external world,
Remember:
The hallucinations which you may now experience,
The visions and insights,
Will teach you much about yourself and the world.
The veil of routine perception will be torn from your eyes.
Remember the unity of all living things.
Remember the bliss of the Clear Light.
Let it guide you through the visions of this experience.
Let it guide you through your new life to come.
If you feel confused; call upon the memory of your friends and the power of the person whom you most admire.

O *(name),*
Try to reach and keep the experience of the Clear Light.
Remember:

The light is the life energy.
The endless flame of life.
An ever-changing surging turmoil of color may engulf your vision.
This is the ceaseless transformation of energy.
The life process.
Do not fear it.
Surrender to it.
Join it.
It is part of you.
You are part of it.
Remember also:
Beyond the restless flowing electricity of life is the ultimate reality—
The Void.
Your own awareness, not formed into anything possessing form or color, is naturally void.
The Final Reality.
The All Good.
The All Peaceful.
The Light.
The Radiance.
The movement is the fire of life from which we all come.
Join it.
It is part of you.
Beyond the light of life is the peaceful silence of the void.
The quiet bliss beyond all transformations.
The Buddha smile.
The Void is not nothingness.
The Void is beginning and end itself.
Unobstructed; shining, thrilling, blissful.
Diamond consciousness.
The All-Good Buddha.
Your own consciousness, not formed into anything,
No thought, no vision, no color, is void.
The intellect shining and blissful and silent—
This is the state of perfect enlightenment.
Your own consciousness, shining, void and inseparable from the great body of radiance, has no birth, nor death.
It is the immutable light which the Tibetans call Buddha Amitabha,
The awareness of the formless beginning.
Knowing this is enough.
Recognize the voidness of your own consciousness to be Buddhahood.

Keep this recognition and you will maintain the state of the divine mind of the Buddha.

Coda

The choice is always ours. Then, let me choose
The longest art, the hard Promethean way
Cherishingly to tend and feed and fan
That inward fire, whose small precarious flame,
Kindled or quenched, creates
The noble or the ignoble men we are,
The worlds we live in and the very fates.
Our bright or muddy star.

—Aldous Huxley
from *Orion,* 1931

Footnotes

Chapter 6: 1952 Downward Transcendence

1 Benjamin Blood coined the term “anaesthetic revelation” in 1874.

Chapter 8: 1953 May Morning In Hollywood

1 An associate of Dr. Osmond and Dr. Abram Hoffer in schizophrenia research at the Saskatchewan Hospital, in Weyburn.

2 *Hibbert J., L.I.,* 2 (Jan. 1953), a summary of their report, “Schizophrenia: A New Approach” *J. Mental Sci.,* 98, (April, 1952).

3 President of the Parapsychology Foundation.

4 Sir Julian Huxley (1887–1975), the famed zoologist, was an older brother of Aldous.

Chapter 9: 1953 Letters

1 Project: the recording of mescalin interviews with fifty to a hundred people of outstanding abilities in various fields. This was outlined by Osmond and his colleague Dr. Abram Hoffer together with a project, already under way, of strictly pharmacological research into mind-affecting drugs. [Smith’s note]

2 Ford doesn’t touch medicine, but is interested in the humanities and would finance the project as a contribution to applied philosophy. Still, it is good to mention the medical angle —make them feel they are killing two birds with one stone.

3 Huxley’s editor at Chatto & Windus.

4 Ellis and Mitchell: see the extract from *The Doors of Perception.*

5 Article by Sidney Katz in *Maclean’s Magazine*

Chapter 10: 1954 The Doors of Perception

1 Louis Lewin (1850-1929), German pharmacologist and toxicologist, author of *Phantastica,* etc. The monograph referred to here is: “Uber Anhalonium Lewinii Henn.” *Arch. f. exp. Path. u. Pharm., 24,* 401–11 (1888—*not* 1886).

2 H. Jaensch published papers on mescalin research in the early 1940s.

3 Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), sexologist and man of letters, the first Englishman to publish on the effects of mescalin: “Mescal: A New Artificial Paradise” *Ann. Kept. Smithsonian Inst.,* 537–48 (1897); “A Note on Mescal Intoxication” *The Lancet,* 1540–42 (1897).

4 S. Weir Mitchell (1820-1914), neurologist and novelist, one of the first Americans to publish on the effects of mescalin: “Remarks on the Effects of Anhalonium Lewinii, the Mescal Button” *Brit. Med.* J., 2, 1625–29 (1896).

5 The actual date was May 6, 1953

Chapter 11: 1954 Letters

1 Leading American investigator of ESP and psi phenomena, subjects which greatly interested Huxley.

2 Osmond, Hoffer and their associates later demonstrated statistically beneficial effects of psychotherapy combined with mescalin and LSD on the problem of alcoholism.

3 Psychotherapist friend of Huxley.

4 Dr. Ladislao Reti, author of a monograph *Cactus Alkaloids and some Related Compounds* (Vienna, 1950).

5 A reviewer.

6 Andrija Puharich, pioneer researcher on the interconnection of psychedelics and parapsychology, author of *In Search of the Magic Mushroom* (1959).

7 Huxley was also aware of Dr. John Lilly’s work in this field; he and Julian Huxley visited Lilly’s laboratory in 1956.

Chapter 13: 1955 Mescaline And The “Other World”

1 *Mescal: The ‘Divine’ Plant and Its Psychological Effects* (London, 1928; Chicago, 1966).

Chapter 14: 1955 Letters

1 *The Genius and the Goddess.*

2 *Heaven and Hell.*

3 Godel’s *Un Compagnon de Socrate: dialogues sur l’expérience libératrice* (Paris, 1956).

4 Huxley had telephoned Osmond apparently to get his approval before participating in

the experiment. Maria Huxley, on a postal card of 11 January, told Osmond: “Probably I ought to know that they know who is the boss—or High Priest I—–1 as you like. But I was very relieved to hear they had telephoned to you.” Captain Albert M. Hubbard maintained a drug-research center in Vancouver. The “pharmacological lady” was Madame Steiner of Paris. [Smith’s note]

5 Carbogen (a mixture of seven parts of oxygen and three parts of carbon dioxide) has been used as a psychotherapeutic agent; its effects are discussed in an appendix to *Heaven and Hell.*

6 *Heaven and Hell.*

7 The psychoanalyst who was chairman of the mescalin-LSD symposium held in Atlantic City on May 12th, tragically killed in an auto accident.

Chapter 15: 1955 Disregarded In The Darkness

1 More likely, mescalin. See Huxley’s letter to Osmond, 29 Oct. 1955. He took LSD for the first time in December.

2 *Island,* pp. 311-313.

Chapter 16: 1955 Letters

1 This is the session that is recounted in the chapter “Disregarded in the Darkness” in Laura Huxley’s *This Timeless Moment.*

Chapter 19: 1956 Letters

1 Text from the hand-corrected carbon copy sent by Huxley to Osmond. Fabing is a Cincinnati physician who co-developed the tranquilizer Frenquel—see the following letter.

2 Indians: Osmond had noted that the Native Church of North America (known to him as Red Pheasant, Sask.), had a remarkable and possibly unique religion inasmuch as its rites were performed as a small group activity, dispensing with a formal priesthood, using an elixir, and achieving an experience shared by the whole congregation. [Smith’s note] See also: Osmond’s introduction to Thomas Hennell’s *The Witnesses* (1967), p. xlii.

3 *Russia, Mushrooms and History* (1957), although Huxley might be referring to Wasson’s report in *Life.*

4 Osmond had mentioned *psychedelics,* as a new name for mind-changing drugs to replace the term *psychotomimetics.* Huxley apparently misread the word as “psychodetics,” hence his mystification. Osmond replied:

> “To fathom Hell or soar angelic, Just take a pinch of psychedelic

Huxley still did not get the spelling, which he made *psychodelic.* [Smith’s note]. Huxley invariably uses *psychodelic* for *psychedelic,* as he and others thought the latter term incorrect. Huxley’s spelling has been retained, as this was undoubtedly his preference. However, it fails one criterion of Osmond, which is that the term be “uncontaminated by other associations

In a letter to Dr. A. Shulgin in 1969, Osmond provided a variant reading of the collaborative verse:

"To make this mundane world sublime,
Take half a gram of phanerothyme.
To sink in Hell or soar angelic,
You'll need a pinch of psychedelic.

5 A long-time Argentinian friend, editor of the distinguished literary review Sur.

6 *Bannisteriopsis caapi,* also called *yagé.*

7 Huxley's son and daughter-in-law.

Chapter 21: 1957 Letters

1 Not in G. Smith. Published in P. B. Smith, *Chemical Glimpses of Reality* (Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1972), pp. 86–87.

Chapter 23: 1958 Letters

1 Los Angeles psychiatrist, author of *The Beyond Within: The LSD Story* (1964) and *LSD* (1967), the latter with R. Alpert.

2 Canadian psychologist, colleague of Osmond, Hoffer and Smythies at the University of Saskatchewan, author of *Frontiers of Being* (1969).

3 Hofmann synthesized LSD and was the first person to test its effects (1943); he successfully isolated and identified psilocybin from the sacred mushrooms of Mexico (1957), and lysergic acid alkaloids from the ancient Aztec drug *ololiuqui.* He and Huxley did not meet until 1961, as Huxley missed the Rome rendezvous.

Chapter 24: 1958 Drugs that Shape Men's Minds

1 Dc Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London, 1822) was the first drug confessional and case history in literature.

2 *Two Sources of Religion and Morality* (1935).

Chapter 25: 1958 Letters

1 Fr. Merton had written to Huxley on 27 November, 1958, raising questions about the validity of drug-induced mystical experience and about the distinction between the mystical

and the aesthetic, his letter having been prompted by Huxley's article "Drugs That Shape Men's Minds" in the *Saturday Evening Post.* [Smith's note]

2 Providential escape: despite his limited eyesight, Huxley sometimes took solitary night walks. On one of these he stumbled from the path and fell down an embankment. He was painfully but not seriously injured. [Smith's note]

3 Sandoz Ltd. of Basel was the chief distributor of LSD and psilocybin for research purposes until 1966.

Chapter 27: 1960 Letters

1 *Watcher on the Hills:* A *Study of Some Mystical Experiences of Ordinary People* (London, 1959).

Chapter 31: 1961 Letters

1 Director of the Psychedelic Research Project at Harvard, 1960-63. Not in Smith.

Chapter 32: 1961 London Interview

1 Huxley had meant to say he had taken mescalin four times and LSD three times. Subsequently he took LSD another time and psilocybin twice, for a total of 10 (documented) psychedelic doses in a decade—virtually the same figure given by L. Huxley and S. Bedford.

Chapter 33: 1961 Visionary Experience

1 Karlis Osis, *Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses.* "Parapsychological Monographs," No. 3. N.Y.: Parapsychology Foundation, Inc. 1961. (Condensed in *International Journal of Parapsychology* (N.Y.), Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring, 1962, pp. 27-56. See also Duncan Blewett, "Psychedelic Drugs in Parapsychological Research," *ibid.,* Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter, 1963, pp. 43-74.)

2 Ancel Keys, *et al, The Biology of Human Starvation.* Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1950.

3 Philippe de Félice, *Poisons Sacrés, Ivresses Divines.* Essai sur quelques formes inférieures de la mystique (Paris, 1936).

4 Roger Heim and R. Gordon Wasson, *Les Champignons Hallucinogènes du Mexique:* Etudes Ethnologiques, Taxinomiques, Biologiques, Physiologiques et Chimiques. With the collaboration of Albert Hofmann, Roger Cailleux, A. Cerletti, Arthur Brack, IIans Kobel, Jean Delay, Pierre Pichot, Th. Lemperière, and J. Nicolas-Charles. *(Archives du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle,* 1958. Series 7, Vol. VI.) (Paris, 1959). The *Curandera* was Maria Sabina.

5 Marguerite A. Séchehaye, *Journal d'une Schizophrène.* Auto-observation d'une

schizophrène pedant le traitement psychothérapique. (Paris, 1950). (Transl, by G. Rubin-Rabson: *Reality Lost and Regained.* Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl, with Analytic Interpretation. (N.Y., 1951). *Watcher on the Hills* (1959).

6 Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton, 1962).

7 *Mescal* (1928).

8 Dr. Leaiy spoke later that day on "How to Change Behavior."

Chapter 34: 1961 Exploring The Borderlands Of The Mind

1 Osgood, C. E., "Towards international behavior appropriate to a nuclear age." In *Psychology and International Affairs,* Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Applied Psychology, Vol. 1, pp. 109-132. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962.

Chapter 35: 1962 Love and Work

1 *Collected Essays* (N.Y.: Bantam, 1960).

2 *You Are Not the Target* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1963), Chapter 23.

3 "The sacred mushrooms" *(Psilocybe mexicana),* of which psilocybin is the chemical synthesis—"or whatever it is," meaning psychedelic materials in general. [L. Huxley's note]

4 *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita.* Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, with an introduction by Aldous Huxley (New York: New American Library, 1994)

5 Paul Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1957).

Chapter 36: 1962 Letters

1 Graves wrote of his psychedelic drug experiences in *The Atlantic Monthly,* and in his book *Food for Centaurs* (1960).

Chapter 38: 1963 Letters

1 Co-editor of *The Psychedelic Review.* Not in Smith.

Chapter 40: 1963 O Nobly Born!

1 *Island.*

2 *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964). See appendix.

3 Dr. Sidney Cohen.

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CHAPTER THREE "Soma" from *Brave New World* (New York: Harper, 1932), pp. 62–66; 93–96.

CHAPTER FOUR "Propaganda And Pharmacology" from *The Olive Tree, and Other Essays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936), pp. 29–30.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN "Disregarded In The Darkness" from *This Timeless Moment: A Personal View of Aldous Huxley* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1968), pp. 143–49.

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